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SIR BROOK FOSSBROOKE

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SIR BROOK FOSSBROOKE

BY

CHARLES LEVER

IN THREE VOLUMES

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SIR BROOK FOSSBROOKE.



CHAPTER XXVI.

SIR BROOK IN CONFUSION.

TOM LENDRICK had just parted with his sister as Fossbrooke came up, and, taking his arm in silence, moved slowly down the road.

Seeing his deep preoccupation, Tom did not speak for some time, but walked along without a word. "I hope you found my grandfather in better temper, sir?" asked Tom at last.

"He refused to receive me; he pleaded illness; or rather he called it by its true name, indisposition. He deputed another gentleman to meet me—a Colonel Sewell, his step-son."

"That's the man my father saw at the Cape; a clever sort of person he called him, but, I suspect, not one to his liking; too much man of

the world—too much man of fashion for poor Dad.”

“I hope so,” muttered Fossbrooke, unconsciously.

“Indeed, sir; and why?” asked Tom, eagerly.

“What of Lucy?” said Sir Brook, abruptly; “how did you think she was looking?”

“Well, sir, on the whole, well. I’ve seen her jollier; but, to be sure, it was a leave-taking to-day, and that’s not the occasion to put one in high spirits. Poor girl, she said, ‘Is it not hard, Tom? there are only three of us, and we must all live apart.’”

“So it is—hard; very hard. I’d have tried once more to influence the old Judge if he’d have given me a meeting. He may do worse with that office than bestow it on you, Tom. I believe I’d have told him as much.”

“It’s perhaps as well, sir, that you did not see him,” said Tom, with a faint smile.

“Yes,” said Fossbrooke, following along the train of his own thoughts, and not noticing the other’s remark. “He may do worse; he may give it to *him*, and thus draw closer the ties between them; and if *that* man once gets admission there, he’ll get influence.”

“Of whom are you talking, sir?”

“I was not speaking, Tom. I was turning over some things in my mind. By the way, we have much to do before evening. Go over to Hodgen’s

about those tools; he has not sent them yet; and the blasting powder, too, has not come down. I ought, if I could manage the time, to test it; but it's too late. I must go to the Castle for five minutes—five minutes will do it; and I'll pass by Grainger's on my way back, and buy the flannel—miners' flannel they call it in the advertisement. We must look our *métier*, Tom, eh? You told Lucy where to write, and how to address us, I hope?"

"Yes, sir, she wrote it down. By the way, that reminds me of a letter she gave me for you. It was addressed to her care, and came yesterday."

The old man thrust it in his pocket without so much as a look at it.

"I think the post-mark was Madeira," said Tom, to try and excite some curiosity.

"Possibly. I have correspondents everywhere."

"It looked like Trafford's writing, I thought."

"Indeed! let us see;" and he drew forth the letter, and broke the envelope. "Right enough, Tom—it is Trafford."

He ran his eyes rapidly over the first lines, turned to the next side, and then to the end of the letter, and then once more began at the beginning.

"This is his third attempt, he says, to reach me, having written twice without any acknowledgment, hence he has taken the liberty—and a very great liberty, too—to address the present to the care of

your sister. His brother died in March last, and the younger brother has now shown symptoms of the same malady, and has been sent out to Madeira. ‘I could not,’ he writes—‘I could not refuse to come out here with him, however eager I was to go to Ireland. You can well believe’”—here the old man slurred over the words, and murmured inaudibly for some seconds. “I see,” added he at last, “he has gone back to his old regiment, with good hopes of the majority. ‘Hinks is sick of the service, and quite willing to leave. Harvey, however, stands above me, and deems it a cruel thing to be passed over. I must have your advice about this, as well as about——’” Here again he dropped his voice and mumbled unintelligibly. At length he read on—“‘What is Tom doing? What a shame it would be if a fellow with such abilities should not make his way!’”

“A crying shame,” burst in Tom, “but I neither see the abilities nor the way; would he kindly indicate how to find either or both?”

“‘My mother suggested,’” read on Sir Brook, “‘two or three things which my father could readily obtain, but you know the price of the promotion; you know what I would have to——’” Here, once more, the old man stopped abruptly.

“Pray go on, sir,” cried Tom, eagerly; “this in-

terests me much, and as it touches myself I have half a claim to hear it."

Sir Brook gave no heed to the request, but read on in silence and to himself. Turning to the last page, he said—"I may then hope to be in England by the end of the month. I shall not go down to Holt, but straight to Dublin. My leave will expire on the 28th, and this will give me a good excuse for not going home. I am sure you will agree with me that I am doing the right thing.

"If I am fortunate enough to meet you in Dublin I can ask your advice on many things which press for solution; but if you should have left Ireland, and gone heaven knows where, what is to become of me?"

"Got into debt again, evidently," said Tom, as he puffed his cigar.

"Nothing of the kind. I know thoroughly what he alludes to, though I am not at liberty to speak of it. He wishes me to leave our address with Colonel Cave at the barracks, and that if we should have left Ireland already, he'll try and manage a month's leave, and pay us a visit."

"I declare I guessed that!" burst out Tom. "I had a dread of it, from the very day we first planned our project. I said to myself, So sure as we settle down to work—to work like men who have no thought but how to earn their bread—some lavender-

gloved fellow, with a dressing-case and three hat-boxes, will drop down to disgust us alike with our own hardships and *his* foppery."

"He'll not come," said Sir Brook, calmly ; "and if he should, he will be welcome."

"Oh ! as to that," stammered out Tom, somewhat ashamed of his late warmth, "Trafford is perhaps the one exception to the sort of thing I am afraid of. He is a fine, manly, candid fellow, with no affectations nor any pretensions."

"A gentleman, sir!—just a gentleman, and of a very good type."

The last few lines of the letter were small and finely written, and cost the old man some time to decipher. At last he read them aloud. "'Am I asking what you would see any objection to accord me, if I entreat you to give me some letter of introduction or presentation to the Chief Baron? I presume that you know him; and I presume that he might not refuse to know *me*. It is possible I may be wrong in either or both of these assumptions. I am sure you will be frank in your reply to this request of mine, and say No, if you dislike to say Yes. I made the acquaintance of Colonel Sewell, the Judge's step-son, at the Cape; but I suspect—I may be wrong—but I suspect that to be presented by the Colonel might not be the smoothest road to his lordship's acquaintance—I was going to write

“favour”—but I have no pretension, as yet at least, to aspire that far.

“‘The Colonel himself told me that his mother and Sir William never met without a quarrel. His affectionate remark was, that the Chief Baron was the only creature in Europe whose temper was worse than Lady Lendrick’s, and it would be a blessing to humanity if they could be induced to live together.

“‘I saw a good deal of the Sewells at the Cape. She is charming! She was a Dillon, and her mother a Lascelles, some forty-fifth cousin of my mother’s—quite enough of relationship, however, to excuse a very rapid intimacy, so that I dined there when I liked, and uninvited. I did not like *him* so well; but then, he beat me at billiards, and always won my money at *ecarté*, and of course these are detracting ingredients which ought not to be thrown into the scale.

“‘How she sings! I don’t know how you, with your rapturous love of music, would escape falling in love with her: all the more that she seems to me one who expects that sort of homage, and thinks herself defrauded if denied it. If the Lord Chief Baron is fond of ballads, he has been her captive this many a day.

“‘My love to Tom, if with you or within reach of you; and believe me ever yours affectionately,

“‘LIONEL TRAFFORD.’”

"It was the eldest son who died," said Tom, carelessly.

"Yes, the heir. Lionel now succeeds to a splendid fortune and the baronetcy."

"He told me once that his father had made some sort of compact with his eldest son about cutting off the entail, in case he should desire to do it. In fact, he gave me to understand that he wasn't a favourite with his father, and that, if by any course of events he were likely to succeed to the estate, it was more than probable his father would use this power, and merely leave him what he could not alienate—a very small property that pertained to the baronetage."

"With reference to what did he make this revelation to you? What had you been talking of?"

"I scarcely remember. I think it was about younger sons, how hardly they were treated, and how unfairly."

"Great hardship truly that a man must labour! not to say that there is not a single career in life he can approach without bringing to it greater advantages than befall humbler men—a better and more liberal education, superior habits as regards society, powerful friends, and what in a country like ours is inconceivably effective—the prestige of family. I cannot endure this compassionate tone about younger sons. To my thinking they have the very

best opening that life can offer, if they be men to profit by it, and if they are not, I care very little what becomes of them."

"I do think it hard that my elder brother should have fortune and wealth to over-abundance, while my pittance will scarcely keep me in cigars."

"You have no right, sir, to think of his affluence. It is not in the record; the necessities of your position have no relation to his superfluities. Bethink you of yourself, and if cigars are too expensive for you, smoke cavendish. Trafford was full of this cant about the cruelty of primogeniture, but I would have none of it. Whenever a man tells me that he deems it a hardship that he should do anything for his livelihood, I leave him, and hope never to see more of him."

"Trafford surely did not say so."

"No — certainly not; there would have been no correspondence between us if he had. But I want to see these young fellows showing the world that they shrink from no competitorship with any. They have long proved that to confront danger and meet death they are second to none. Let them show that in other qualities they admit of no inferiority—that they are as ready for enterprise, as well able to stand cold and hunger and thirst, to battle with climate and disease. *I* know well they can do it, but I want the world to know it."

“As to intellectual distinctions,” said Tom, “I think they are the equals of any. The best man in Trinity in my day was a fellow-commoner.”

This speech seemed to restore the old man to his best humour. He slapped young Lendrick familiarly on the shoulder, and said, “It would be a grand thing, Tom, if we could extend the application of that old French adage, ‘*Noblesse oblige*,’ and make it apply to every career in life, and every success. Come along down this street; I want to buy some nails—we can take them home with us.”

They soon made their purchases, and each, armed with a considerably-sized brown paper parcel, issued from the shop—the old man eagerly following up the late theme, and insisting on all the advantages good birth and blood conferred, and what a grand resource was the gentleman element in moments of pressure and temptation.

“His Excellency wishes to speak to you, sir,” said a footman, respectfully standing hat in hand before him. “The carriage is over the way.”

Sir Brook nodded an assent, and then, turning to Tom, said, “Have the kindness to hold this for me for a moment; I will not detain you longer;” and placing in young Lendrick’s hands a good-sized parcel, he stepped across the street, totally forgetting that over his left arm, the hand of which was in his pocket, a considerable coil of strong rope depended,

being one of his late purchases. As he drew nigh the carriage he made a sign that implied defeat; and mortified as the Viceroy was at the announcement, he could not help smiling at the strange guise in which the old man presented himself.

“And how so, Fossbrooke?” asked he, in answer to the other’s signal.

“Simply, he would not see me, my lord. Our first meeting had apparently left no very agreeable memories of me, and he scarcely cared to cultivate an acquaintance that opened so inauspiciously.”

“But you sent him your card with my name?”

“Yes; and his reply was to depute another gentleman to receive me, and take my communication.”

“Which you refused, of course, to make?”

“Which I refused.”

“Do you incline to suppose that the Chief Baron guessed the object of your visit?”

“I have no means of arriving at that surmise, my lord. His refusal of me was so peremptory, that it left me no clue to any guess.”

“Was the person deputed to receive you one with whom it was at all possible to indicate such an intimation of your business, as might convey to the Chief Baron the necessity of seeing you.”

“Quite the reverse, my lord; he was one with whom, from previous knowledge, I could hold little converse.”

"Then there is, I fear, nothing to be done."

"Nothing."

"Except to thank you heartily, my dear Fossbrooke, and ask you once more, why are you going away?"

"I told you last night, I was going to make a fortune. I have—to my own astonishment I own it—begun to feel that narrow means are occasionally most inconvenient; that they limit a man's action in so many ways, that he comes at last to experience a sort of slavery; and instead of chafing against this, I am resolved to overcome it, and become rich."

"I hope, with all my heart, you may. There is no man whom wealth will more become, or who will know how to dispense it more reputably."

"Why, we have gathered a crowd around us, my lord," said Fossbrooke, looking to right and left, where now a number of people had gathered, attracted by the Viceroy's presence, but still more amused by the strange-looking figure with the hank of rope over his arm, who discoursed so freely with his Excellency. "This is one of the penalties of greatness, I take it," continued he. "It's your Excellency's Collar of St Patrick costs you these attentions——"

"I rather suspect it's *your* 'grand cordon,' Fossbrooke," said the Viceroy, laughing, while he pointed to the rope.

"Bless my stars!" exclaimed Sir Brook, blushing

deeply, "how forgetful I am growing! I hope you forgive me. I am sure you could not suppose——"

"I could never think anything but good of you, Fossbrooke. Get in, and come out to 'the Lodge' to dinner."

"No, no; impossible. I am heartily ashamed of myself. I grow worse and worse every day; people will lose patience at last, and cut me; good-bye."

"Wait one moment. I want to ask you something about young Lendrick. Would he take an appointment in a colonial regiment—would he?——" But Fossbrooke had elbowed his way through the dense crowd by this time, and was far out of hearing—shocked with himself, and overwhelmed with the thought that, in his absurd forgetfulness, he might have involved another in ridicule.

"Think of me standing talking to his Excellency with this on my arm, Tom!" said he, flushing with shame and annoyance: "how these absent fits keep advancing on me! When a man begins to forget himself in this fashion, the time is not very distant when his friends will be glad to forget him. I said so this moment to Lord Wilmington, and I am afraid that he agreed with me. Where are the screws, Tom—have I been forgetting them also?"

"No, sir, I have them here; the holdfasts were not finished, but they will be sent over to us this evening, along with the cramps you ordered."

“So, then, my head was clear so far,” cried he, with a smile. “In my prosperous days, Tom, these freaks of mine were taken as good jokes, and my friends laughed at them over my burgundy; but when a man has no longer burgundy to wash down his blunders with, it is strange how different becomes the criticism, and how much more candid the critic.”

“So that, in point of enlightenment, sir, it is better to be poor.”

“It is what I was just going to observe to you,” said he, calmly. “Can you give me a cigar?”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TWO LUCYS.

WITHIN a week after this incident, while Fossbrooke and young Lendrick were ploughing the salt sea towards their destination, Lucy sat in her room one morning engaged in drawing. She was making a chalk copy from a small photograph her brother had sent her, a likeness of Sir Brook, taken surreptitiously as he sat smoking at a window, little heeding or knowing of the advantage thus taken of him.

The head was considerably advanced, the brow and the eyes were nearly finished, and she was trying, for the third time, to get an expression into the mouth which the photograph had failed to convey, but which she so often observed in the original. Eagerly intent on her work, she never heard the door open behind her; and was slightly startled as a very gentle hand was laid on her shoulder.

“Is this a very presumptuous step of mine, dear

Lucy?" said Mrs Sewell, with one of her most bewitching smiles: "have I your leave for coming in upon you in this fashion?"

"Of course you have, my dear Mrs Sewell; it is a great pleasure to me to see you here."

"And I may take off my bonnet, and my shawl, and my gloves, and my company manner, as my husband calls it?"

"Oh! *you* have no company manner," broke in Lucy.

"I used to think not; but men are stern critics, darling, and especially when they are husbands. You will find out, one of these days, how neatly your liege lord will detect every little objectionable trait in your nature, and with what admirable frankness he will caution you against—yourself."

"I almost think I'd rather he would not."

"I'm very certain of it, Lucy," said the other, with greater firmness than before. "The thing we call love, in married life has an existence only a little beyond that of the bouquet you carried to the wedding-breakfast; and it would be unreasonable in a woman to expect it, but she might fairly ask for courtesy and respect, and you would be amazed how churlish even gentlemen can become about expending these graces in their own families."

Lucy was both shocked and astonished at what

she heard, and the grave tone in which the words were uttered surprised her most of all.

Mrs Sewell had by this time taken off her bonnet and shawl, and, pushing back her luxuriant hair from her forehead, looked as though suffering from headache, for her brows were contracted, and the orbits around her eyes dark and purple-looking.

"You are not quite well to-day," said Lucy, as she sat down on the sofa beside her, and took her hand.

"About as well as I ever am," said she, sighing; and then, as if suddenly recollecting herself, added, "India makes such an inroad on health and strength! No buoyancy of temperament ever resisted that fatal climate. You wouldn't believe it, Lucy, but I was once famed for high spirits."

"I can well believe it."

"It was, however, very long ago. I was little more than a child at the time—that is, I was about fourteen or fifteen—when I left England, to which I returned in my twentieth year. I went back very soon afterwards to nurse my poor father, and be married."

The depth of sadness in which she spoke the last words made the silence that followed intensely sad and gloomy.

"Yes," said she, with a deep melancholy smile, "papa called me madcap. Oh dear, if our fathers

and mothers could look back from that eternity they have gone to, and see how the traits they traced in our childhood have saddened and sobered down into sternest features, would they recognise us as their own? I don't look like a madcap now, Lucy, do I?" As she said this, her eyes swam in tears, and her lip trembled convulsively. Then standing hastily up, she drew nigh the table, and leaned over to look at the drawing at which Lucy had been engaged.

"What!" cried she, with almost a shriek—"what is this? Whose portrait is this? tell me at once; who is it?"

"A very dear friend of mine and of Tom's. One you could not have ever met, I'm sure."

"And how do you know whom I have met?" cried she, fiercely. "What can you know of my life and my associates?"

"I said so, because he is one who has lived long estranged from the world," said Lucy, gently; for in the sudden burst of the other's passion she only saw matter for deep compassion. It was but another part of a nature torn and distracted by unceasing anxieties.

"But his name, his name?" said Mrs Sewell, wildly.

"His name is Sir Brook Fossbrooke."

"I knew it, I knew it!" cried she, wildly—"I knew it!" and said it over and over again. "Go

where we will we shall find him. He haunts us like a curse—like a curse!” And it was in almost a shriek the last word came forth.

“You cannot know the man, if you say this of him,” said Lucy, firmly.

“Not know him!—not know him! You will tell me next that I do not know myself—not know my own name—not know the life of bitterness I have lived—the shame of it—the ineffable shame of it!” and she threw herself on her face on the sofa, and sobbed convulsively. Long and anxiously did Lucy try all in her power to comfort and console her. She poured out her whole heart in pledges of sisterly love and affection. She assured her of a sympathy that would never desert her; and, last of all, she told her that her judgment of Sir Brook was a mistaken one—that in the world there lived not one more true-hearted, more generous, or more noble.

“And where did you learn all this, young woman?” said the other, passionately. “In what temptations and trials of your life have these experiences been gained? Oh, don’t be angry with me, dearest Lucy; forgive this rude speech of mine; my head is turning, and I know not what I say. Tell me, child, did this man speak to you of my husband?”

“No.”

“Nor of myself?”

"Not a word. I don't believe he was aware that we were related to each other."

"He not aware! Why, it's his boast that he knows every one and every one's connections. You never heard him speak without this parade of universal acquaintanceship. But why did he come here? how did you happen to meet him?"

"By the merest accident. Tom found him one day fishing the river close to our house, and they got to talk together; and it ended by his coming to us to tea. Intimacy followed very quickly, and then a close friendship."

"And do you mean to tell me that all this while he never alluded to us?"

"Never."

"This is so unlike him—so unlike him," muttered she, half to herself. "And the last place you saw him, where was it?"

"Here, in this house."

"Here! do you mean that he came here to see you?"

"No, he had some business with grandpapa, and called one morning, but he was not received. Grandpapa was not well, and sent Colonel Sewell to meet him."

"He sent my husband! And did he go?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I know it."

"I never heard of this," said she, holding her hands to her temples. "About what time was it?"

"It was on Friday last. I remember the day, because it was the last time I saw poor Tom."

"On Friday last," said she, pondering. "Yes, you are right. I do remember that Friday;" and she drew up the sleeve of her dress, and looked at a dark blue mark upon the fair white skin of her arm; but so hastily was the action done that Lucy did not remark it.

"It was on Friday morning. It was on the forenoon of Friday, was it not?"

"Yes. The clock struck one, I remember, as I got back to the house."

"Tell me, Lucy," said she, in a caressing tone, as she drew her arm round the girl's waist—"tell me, darling, how did Colonel Sewell look after that interview? did he seem angry or irritated?—I'll tell you why I ask this some other time—but I want to know if he seemed vexed or chagrined by meeting this man."

"I did not see him after; he went away almost immediately after Sir Brook. I heard his voice talking with grandpapa in the garden, but I went to my room, and we did not meet."

"As they spoke in the garden were their voices

raised? did they talk like men excited or in warmth?"

"Yes. Their tone and manner were what you say—so much so that I went away, not to overhear them. Grandpapa, I know, was angry at something, and when we met at luncheon he barely spoke to me."

"And what conclusion did you draw from all this?"

"None! There was nothing to induce me to dwell on the circumstance; besides," added she, with some irritation, "I am not given to reason upon the traits of people's manner, or their tone in speaking."

"Nor perhaps accustomed to inquire, when your grandfather is vexed, what it is that has irritated him?"

"Certainly not. It is a liberty I should not dare to take."

"Well, darling," said she, with a saucy laugh, "he is more fortunate in having *you* for a granddaughter than *me*. I'm afraid I should have less discretion—at all events less dread."

"Don't be so sure of that," said Lucy, quietly. "Grandpapa is no common person. It is not his temper but his talent that one is loath to encounter."

"I do not suspect that either would terrify me greatly. As the soldiers say, Lucy, 'I have been under fire' pretty often, and I don't mind it now. Do you know, child, that we have got into a most irrit-

able tone with each other? each of us is saying something that provokes a sharp reply, and we are actually sparring without knowing it."

"I certainly did not know it," said Lucy, taking her hand within both her own, "and I ask pardon if I have said anything to hurt you."

Leaving her hand to Lucy unconsciously, and not heeding one word of what she had said, Mrs Sewell sat with her eyes fixed on the floor, deep in thought. "I'm sure, Lucy," said she at last, "I don't know why I asked you all those questions a while ago. That man, Sir Brook I mean, is nothing to me; he ought to be, but he is not. My father and he were friends; that is, my father thought he was his friend, and left him the guardianship of me on his deathbed."

"Your guardian—Sir Brook your guardian?" cried Lucy, with intense eagerness.

"Yes; with more power than the law, I believe, would accord to any guardian." She paused and seemed lost in thought for some seconds, and then went on, "Colonel Sewell and he never liked each other. Sir Brook took little trouble to be liked by him; perhaps Dudley was as careless on his side. What a tiresome vein I have got in! How should *you* care for all this?"

"But I do care—I care for all that concerns you."

"I take it if you were to hear Sir Brook's account, we should not make a more brilliant figure than him-

self. He'd tell you about our mode of life and high play, and the rest of it; but, child, every one plays high in India, every one does scores of things there they wouldn't do at home, partly because the ennui of life tempts to anything—anything that would relieve it; and then all are tolerant because all are equally—I was going to say wicked; but I don't mean wickedness—I mean bored to that degree that there is no stimulant left without a breach of the decalogue.”

“I think that might be called wickedness,” said Lucy, dryly.

“Call it what you like, only take my word for it you'd do the selfsame things if you lived there. I was pretty much what you are now when I left England, and if any naughty creature like myself were to talk, as I am doing to you now, and make confession of all her misdeeds and misfortunes, I'm certain I'd have known how to bridle up and draw away my hand, and retire to a far end of the sofa, and look unutterable pruderies, just as you do this moment.”

“Without ever suspecting it, certainly,” said Lucy, laughing.

“Tear up that odious drawing, dear Lucy,” said she, rising and walking the room with impatience. “Tear it up; or, if you won't do that, let me write a line under it—one line, I ask for no more—so that people may know at whom they are looking.”

"I will do neither; nor will I sit here to listen to one word against him."

"Which means, child, that your knowledge of life is so much greater than mine, you can trust implicitly to your own judgment. I can admire your courage, certainly, though I am not captivated by your prudence."

"It is because I have so little faith in my own judgment that I am unwilling to lose the friend who can guide me."

"Perhaps it would be unsafe if I were to ask you to choose between *him* and *me*," said Mrs Sewell, very slowly, and with her eyes fully bent on Lucy.

"I hope you will not."

"With such a warning I certainly shall not do so. Who could have believed it was so late?" said she, hastily looking at her watch; "what a seductive creature you must be, child, to slip over one's whole morning without knowing it—two o'clock already. You lunch about this time?"

"Yes, punctually at two."

"Are you sufficiently lady of the house to invite me, Lucy?"

"I am sure *you* need no invitation here; you are one of us."

"What a little Jesuit it is," said Mrs Sewell, patting her cheek. "Come, child, I'll be equal with you. I'll enter the room on your arm, and say, 'Sir Wil-

liam, your granddaughter insisted on my remaining; I thought it an awkwardness, but she tells me she is the mistress here, and I obey.’”

“And you will find he will be too well bred to contradict you,” said Lucy, while a deep blush covered her face and throat.

“Oh, I think him positively charming!” said Mrs Sewell, as she arranged her hair before the glass; “I think him charming. My mother-in-law and I have a dozen pitched battles every day on the score of his temper and his character. *My* theory is, the only intolerable thing on earth is a fool; and whether it be that Lady Lendrick suspects me of any secret intention to designate one still nearer to her by this reservation, I do not know, but the declaration drives her half crazy. Come, Lucy, we shall be keeping grand-papa waiting for us.”

They moved down the stairs arm-in-arm, without a word; but as they gained the door of the dining-room Mrs Sewell turned fully round and said, in a low deep voice, “Marry anything—rake, gambler, villain—anything, the basest and the blackest; but never take a fool, for a fool means them all combined.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE NEST WITH STRANGE "BIRDS" IN IT.

To the Swan's Nest, very differently tenanted from what we saw it at the opening of our story, we have now to conduct our reader. Its present occupant, "the acquisition to any neighbourhood," as the house-agent styled him, was Colonel Sewell.

Lady Lendrick had taken the place for her son, on finding that Sir William would not extend his hospitality to him. She had taken the precaution not merely to pay a year's rent in advance, but to make a number of changes in the house and its dependencies, which she hoped might render the residence more palatable to him, and reconcile him in some degree to its isolation and retirement.

The Colonel was, however, one of those men—they are numerous enough in this world—who canvass the mouth of the gift-horse, and have few scruples in detecting the signs of his age. He criticised the whole place with a most commendable frankness. It

was a "poky little hole." It was dark, it was low-ceilinged. It was full of inconveniences. The furniture was old-fashioned. You had to mount two steps into the drawing-room, and go down three into the dining-room. He had to cross a corridor to his bath-room, and there was a great Tudor window in the small breakfast-parlour, that made one feel as if sitting in a lantern.

As for the stables, "he wouldn't put a donkey into them." No light, no ventilation, no anything, in short. To live surrounded with so many inconveniences was the most complete assertion of his fallen condition, and, as he said, "he had never realised his fall in the world till he settled down in that miserable Nest."

There are men whose especial delight it is to call your attention to their impaired condition, their threadbare coat, their patched shoes, their shabby equipage, or their sorry dwelling, as though they were framing a sort of indictment against Fate and setting forth the hardships of persons of merit like them being subjected to this unjustifiable treatment by Fortune.

"I suppose you never thought to see me reduced to this," is the burden of their song; and it is very strange how, by mere repetition and insistence, these people establish for themselves a sort of position, and oblige the world to yield them a black-mail of respect and condolence.

"This was not the sort of tippie I used to set before you once on a time, old fellow," will be uttered by one of whose hospitalities you have never partaken. "It was another guess sort of beast I gave you for a mount when we met last," will be said by a man who never rose above a cob pony; and one is obliged to yield a kind of polite assent to such balderdash, or stand forward as a public prosecutor and arraign the rascal for a humbug.

In this self-commiseration Sewell was a master, and there was not a corner of the house he did not make the butt of his ridicule—to contrast its littleness and vulgarity with the former ways and belongings of his own once splendour.

"You're capital fellows," said he to a party of officers from the neighbouring garrison, "to come and see me in this dog-hole. Try and find a chair you can sit on, and I'll ask my wife if we can give you some dinner. You remember me up at Rangoon, Hobbes? another guess sort of place, wasn't it? I had the Rajah's palace and four elephants at my orders. At Guzerat too I was the Resident, and by Jove I never dreamed of coming down to this!"

Too indolent or too indifferent to care where or how she was lodged, his wife gave no heed to his complaints, beyond a little half-supercilious smile as he uttered them. "If a fellow will marry, however, he deserves it all," was his usual wind-up to all his

lamentations ; and in this he seemed to console himself by the double opportunity of pitying himself and insulting his wife.

All that Colonel Cave and his officers could say in praise of the spot, its beauty, its neatness, and its comfort, were only fresh aliment to his depreciation, and he more than half implied that possibly the place was quite good enough for *them*, but that was not exactly the question at issue.

Some men go through life permitted to say scores of things for which their neighbour would be irrevocably cut and excluded from society. Either that the world is amused at their bitterness, or that it is regarded as a malady, far worse to him who bears than to him who witnesses it—whatever the reason—people endure these men, and make even a sort of vicious pets of them. Sewell was of this order, and a fine specimen too.

All the men around him were his equals in every respect, and yet there was not one of them who did not accept a position of quiet, unresisting inferiority to him for the sake of his bad temper and his bad tongue. It was “his way,” they said, and they bore it.

He was a consummate adept in all the details of a household ; and his dinners were perfection, his wine good, and his servants drilled to the very acme of discipline. These were not mean accessories to any pre-

tension ; and as they sat over their claret, a pleasanter and more social tone succeeded than the complaining spirit of their host had at first promised.

The talk was chiefly professional. Pipeclay will ever assert its pre-eminence, and with reason ; for it is a grand leveller ; and Digges, who joined three months ago, may have the Army List as well by heart as the oldest major in the service : and so they discussed, Where was Hobson ? what made Jobson sell out ? how did Bobson get out of that scrape with the paymaster ? and how long will Dobson be able to live at his present rate in that light cavalry corps ? Everything that fell from them showed the most thorough intimacy with the condition, the fortune, and the prospects of the men they discussed—familiarity there was enough of, but no friendship. No one seemed to trouble himself whether the sick-leave or the sell-out meant hopeless calamity—all were dashed with a species of well-bred fatalism that was astonished with nothing, rejoiced at nothing, repined at nothing.

"I wish Trafford would make up his mind !" cried one. "Three weeks ago he told me positively he would leave, and now I hear he offered Craycroft three thousand pounds to retire from the majority."

"That's true ; Craycroft told me so himself ; but old Joe is a wily bird, and he'll not be taken so easily."

"He's an eldest son now," broke in another. "What does he care whether he be called major or captain?"

"An eldest son!" cried Sewell, suddenly; "how is that? When I met him at the Cape he spoke of an elder brother."

"So he had then, but he's 'off the hooks.'"

"I don't think it matters much," said the Colonel. "The bulk of the property is disentailed, and Sir Hugh can leave it how he likes."

"That's what I call downright shameful," said one; but he was the minority, for a number of voices exclaimed—

"And perfectly right; that law of primogeniture is a positive barbarism."

While the dispute waxed warm and noisy, Sewell questioned the Colonel closely about Trafford—how it happened that the entail was removed, and why there was reason to suppose that Sir Hugh and his son were not on terms of friendship.

Cave was frank enough when he spoke of the amount of the fortune and the extent of the estate, but used a careful caution in speaking of family matters, merely hinting that Trafford had gone very fast, spent a deal of money, had his debts twice paid by his father, and was now rather in the position of a reformed spendthrift, making a good character for prudence and economy.

"And where is he?—not in Ireland?" asked Sewell, eagerly.

"No; he is to join on Monday. I got a hurried note from him this morning, dated Holyhead. You said you had met him?"

"Yes, at the Cape; he used to come and dine with us there occasionally."

"Did you like him?"

"In a way. Yes, I think he was a nice fellow—that is, he might be made a nice fellow, but it was always a question into what hands he fell; he was at the same time pliant and obstinate. He would always imitate—he would never lead. So he seemed to me; but, to tell you the truth, I left him a good deal to the women; he was too young and too fresh for a man like myself."

"You are rather hard on him," said Cave, laughing; "but you are partly right. He has, however, fine qualities—he is generous and trustful to any extent."

"Indeed!" said Sewell, carelessly, as he bit off the end of a cigar.

"Nothing would make him swerve from his word; and if placed in a difficulty where a friend was involved, his own interests would be the last he'd think of."

"Very fine, all that. Are you drinking claret?—

if so, finish that decanter, and let's have a fresh bottle."

Cave declined to take more wine, and he arose, with the rest, to repair to the drawing-room for coffee.

It was not very usual for Sewell to approach his wife or notice her in society; now, however, he drew a chair near her as she sat at the fire, and, in a low whisper, said—"I have some pleasant news for you."

"Indeed!" she said, coldly—"what a strange incident!"

"You mean it is a strange channel for pleasant news to come through, perhaps," said he, with a curl of his lip.

"Possibly that is what I meant," said she, as quietly as before.

"None of these fine-lady airs with me, madam," said he, reddening with anger; "there are no two people in Europe ought to understand each other better than we do."

"In that I quite agree with you."

"And as such is the case, affectations are clean thrown away, madam; we *can* have no disguises for each other."

A very slight inclination of her head seemed to assent to this remark, but she did not speak.

"We came to plain speaking many a day ago,"

said he, with increased bitterness in his tone. "I don't see why we are to forego the advantage of it now—do you?"

"By no means. Speak as plainly as you wish; I am quite ready to hear you."

"You have managed, however, to make people observe us," muttered he between his teeth—"it's an old trick of yours, madam. You can play martyr at the shortest notice." He rose hastily and moved to another part of the room, where a very noisy group were arranging a party for pool at billiards.

"Won't you have me?" cried Sewell, in his ordinary tone. "I'm a perfect boon at pool; for I'm the most unlucky dog in everything."

"I scarcely think you'll expect us to believe *that*," said Cave, with a glance of unmistakable admiration towards Mrs Sewell.

"Ay," cried Sewell, fiercely, and answering the unspoken sentiment—"ay, sir, and *that*"—he laid a stern emphasis on the word—"and *that* the worst luck of all."

"I've been asking Mrs Sewell to play a game with us, and she says she has no objection," said a young subaltern, "if Colonel Sewell does not dislike it."

"I'll play whist, then," said Sewell. "Who'll make a rubber?—Cave, will you? Here's Houghton and Mowbray—eh!"

"No, no," said Mowbray—"you are all too good for me."

"How I hate that—too good for *me*," said Sewell. "Why, man, what better investment could you ask for your money than the benefit of good teaching? Always ride with the best hounds—play with the best players—talk with the best talkers."

"And make love to the prettiest women," added Cave, in a whisper, as Mowbray followed Mrs Sewell into the billiard-room.

"I heard you, Cave," whispered Sewell, in a still lower whisper; "there's devilish little escapes *my* ears, I promise you." The bustle and preparation of the card-table served in part to cover Cave's confusion, but his cheek tingled and his hand shook with mingled shame and annoyance.

Sewell saw it all, and knew how to profit by it. He liked high play, to which Cave generally objected; but he well knew that on the present occasion Cave would concur in anything to cover his momentary sense of shame.

"Pounds and fives, I suppose," said Sewell; and the others bowed, and the game began.

As little did Cave like three-handed whist, but he was in no mood to oppose anything; for, like many men who have made an awkward speech, he exaggerated the meaning through his fears, and made it appear absolutely monstrous to himself.

"Whatever you like," was therefore his remark; and he sat down to the game.

Sewell was a skilled player; but the race is no more to the swift in cards than in anything else—he lost, and lost heavily. He undervalued his adversaries too, and, in consequence, he followed up his bad luck by increased wagers. Cave tried to moderate the ardour he displayed, and even remonstrated with him on the sums they were staking, which, he good-humouredly remarked, were far above his own pretensions; but Sewell resented the advice, and replied with a coarse insinuation about winners' counsels. The ill luck continued, and Sewell's peevishness and ill temper increased with every game. "What have I lost to you?" cried he, abruptly, to Cave; "it jars on my nerves every time you take out that cursed memorandum, so that all I can do is not to fling it into the fire."

"I'm sure I wish you would, or that you would let me do it," said Cave, quietly.

"How much is it?—not short of three hundred, I'll be bound."

"It is upwards of five hundred," said Cave, handing the book across the table.

"You'll have to wait for it, I promise you. You must give me time, for I am in all sorts of messes just now." While Cave assured him that there was no question of pressing for payment—to take his

own perfect convenience—Sewell, not heeding him, went on, "This confounded place has cost me a pot of money. My wife, too, knows how to scatter her five-pound notes; in short, we are a wasteful lot. Shall we have one rubber more, eh?"

"As you like. I am at your orders."

"Let us say double or quits, then, for the whole sum."

Cave made no reply, and seemed not to know how to answer.

"Of course if you object," said Sewell, pushing back his chair from the table, as though about to rise, "there's no more to be said."

"What do *you* say, Houghton?" asked Cave.

"Houghton has nothing to say to it; *he* hasn't won twenty pounds from me," said Sewell, fiercely.

"Whatever you like, then," said Cave, in a tone in which it was easy to see irritation was with difficulty kept under, and the game began.

The game began in deep silence. The restrained temper of the players and the heavy sum together impressed them, and not a word was dropped. The cards fell upon the table with a clear, sharp sound, and the clink of the counters resounded through the room, the only noises there.

As they played, the company from the billiard-room poured in and drew around the whist-table, at first noisily enough; but seeing the deep preoc-

cupation of the players, their steadfast looks, their intense eagerness, made more striking by their silence, they gradually lowered their voices, and at last only spoke in whispers, and rarely.

The first game of the rubber had been contested trick by trick, but ended by Cave winning it. The second game was won by Sewell, and the third opened with his deal.

As he dealt the cards, a murmur ran through the bystanders that the stake was something considerable, and the interest increased in consequence. A few trifling bets were laid on the issue, and one of the group, in a voice slightly raised above the rest, said, "I'll back Sewell for a pony."

"I beg you will not, sir," said Sewell, turning fiercely round. "I'm in bad luck already, and I don't want to be swamped altogether. There, sir, your interference has made me misdeal," cried he, passionately, as he flung the cards on the table.

Not a word was said as Cave began his deal. It was too plain to every one that Sewell's temper was becoming beyond control, and that a word or a look might bring the gravest consequences.

"What cards!" said Cave, as he spread his hand on the table: "four honours and nine trumps."

Sewell stared at them, moved his fingers through them to separate and examine them, and then, turning his head round, he looked behind. It was his

wife was standing at the back of his chair, calm, pale, and collected. "By Heaven!" cried he, savagely, 'I knew who was there as well as if I saw her. The moment Cave spread out his cards, I'd have taken my oath that *she* was standing over me."

She moved hastily away at the ruffianly speech, and a low murmur of indignant anger filled the room. Cave and Houghton quitted the table, and mingled with the others; but Sewell sat still, tearing up the cards one by one, with a quiet, methodical persistence that betrayed no passion. "There!" said he, as he threw the last fragment from him, "you shall never bring good or bad luck to any one more." With the ease of one to whom such paroxysms were not unfrequent, he joined in the conversation of a group of young men, and with a familiar jocularly soon set them at their ease towards him; and then, drawing his arm within Cave's, he led him apart, and said, "I'll go over to the Barrack to-morrow and breakfast with you. I have just thought of how I can settle this little debt."

"Oh, don't distress yourself about that," said Cave. "I beg you will not let it give you a moment's uneasiness."

"Good fellow!" said Sewell, clapping him on the shoulder; "but I have the means of doing it without inconvenience, as I'll show you to-morrow. Don't go yet; don't let your fellows go. We are

going to have a broil, or a devilled biscuit, or something." He walked over and rang the bell, and then hastily passed on into a smaller room, where his wife was sitting on a sofa, an old doctor of the regiment seated at her side.

"I won't interrupt the consultation," said Sewell, "but I have just one word to say." He leaned over the back of the sofa, and whispered in her ear, "Your friend Trafford is become an eldest son. He is at the Bilton Hotel, Dublin; write and ask him here. Say I have some cock-shooting—there are harriers in the neighbourhood. Are you listening to me, madam?" said he, in a harsh, hissing voice, for she had half turned away her head, and her face had assumed an expression of sickened disgust. She nodded, but did not speak. "Tell him that I've spoken to Cave—he'll make his leave all right—that I'll do my best to make the place pleasant to him, and that—in fact, I needn't try to teach you to write a sweet note. You understand me, eh?"

"Oh, perfectly," said she, rising, and a livid paleness now spread over her face, and even her lips were bloodless.

"I was too abrupt with my news. I ought to have been more considerate; I ought to have known it might overcome you," said he, with a sneering bitterness. "Doctor, you'll have to give Mrs Sewell

some cordial, some restorative—that's the name for it. She was overcome by some tidings I brought her. Even pleasant news will startle us occasionally. As the French comedy has it, 'La joie fait peur;'" and, with a listless, easy air, he sauntered away into another room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SEWELL VISITS CAVE.

PUNCTUAL to his appointment, Sewell appeared at breakfast the next morning with Colonel Cave. Of all the ill humour and bad conduct of the night before, not a trace now was to be seen. He was easy, courteous, and affable. He even made a half-jesting apology for his late display of bad temper; attributing it to an attack of coming gout. "So long as the malady," said he, "is in a state of menace, one's nerves become so fine-strung, that there is no name for the irritability; but when once a good honest seizure has taken place, a man recovers himself, and stands up to his suffering manfully and well.

"To-day, for instance," said he, "pointing to a shoe divided by long incisions, "I have got my enemy fixed, and I let him do his worst."

The breakfast proceeded pleasantly; Cave was in admiration of his guest's agreeability; for he talked

away, not so much of things, as of people. He had, in a high degree, that man-of-the-world gift of knowing something about every one. No name could turn up of which he could not tell you something the owner of it had said or done, and these "scratch" biographies are often very amusing, particularly when struck off with the readiness of a practised talker.

It was not, then, merely that Sewell obliterated every memory of the evening before, but he made Cave forget the actual object for which he had come that morning. Projects, besides, for future pleasure did Sewell throw out, like a man who had both the leisure, the means, and the taste for enjoyment. There was some capital shooting he had just taken; his neighbour, an old squire, had never cared for it, and let him have it "for a song." They were going to get up hack races, too, in the Park—"half-a-dozen hurdles and a double ditch to tumble over," as he said, "will amuse our garrison fellows—and my wife has some theatrical intentions—if you will condescend to help her."

Sewell talked with that blended munificence and shiftiness, which seems a specialty with a certain order of men. Nothing was too costly to be done, and yet everything must be accomplished with a dexterity that was almost a dodge. The men of this gift are great scene-painters. They dash you off a

view—be it a wood or a rich interior, a terraced garden or an Alpine hut—in a few loose touches. Ay! and they “smudge” them out again before criticism has had time to deal with them. “By the way,” cried he, suddenly, stopping in the full swing of some description of a possible regatta, “I was half forgetting what brought me here this morning. I am in your debt, Cave.”

He stopped as though his speech needed some rejoinder, and Cave grew very red and very uneasy—tried to say something—anything—but could not. The fact was, that, like a man who had never in all his life adventured on high play or risked a stake that could possibly be of importance to him, he felt pretty much the same amount of distress at having won as he would have felt at having lost. He well knew that if by any mischance he had incurred such a loss as a thousand pounds, it would have been a most serious embarrassment—by what right, then, had he won it? Now, although feelings of this sort were about the very last to find entrance into Sewell’s heart, he well knew that there were men who were liable to them, just as there were people who were exposed to plague or yellow fever, and other maladies from which he lived remote. It was, then, with a sort of selfish delight that he saw Cave’s awkward hesitating manner, and read the marks of the shame that was overwhelming him.

"A heavy sum too," said Sewell, jauntily; "we went the whole 'pot' on that last rubber."

"I wish I could forget it—I mean," muttered Cave, "I wish we could both forget it."

"I have not the least objection to that," said Sewell, gaily; "only let it first be paid."

"Well, but—what I meant was—what I wanted to say, or rather, what I hoped—was—in plain words, Sewell," burst he out, like a man to whom desperation gave courage,—“in plain words, I never intended to play such stakes as we played last night—I never have—I never will again."

"Not to give me my revenge?" said Sewell, laughing.

"No, not for anything. I don't know what I'd have done—I don't know what would have become of me—if I had lost; and I pledge you my honour, I think the next worst thing is to have won."

"Do you, by George!"

"I do, upon my sacred word of honour. My first thoughts on waking this morning were more wretched than they have been for any day in the last twenty years of life, for I was thoroughly ashamed of myself."

"You'll not find many men afflicted with your malady, Cave; and, at all events, it's not contagious."

"I know nothing about that," said Cave, half

irritably; "I never was a play man, and have little pretension to understand their feelings."

"They haven't got any," said Sewell, as he lit his cigar.

"Perhaps not; so much the worse for them. I can only say, if the misery of losing be only proportionate to the shame of winning, I don't envy a gambler. Such an example, too, to exhibit to my young officers! It was too bad—too bad."

"I declare I don't understand this," said Sewell, carelessly; "when I commanded a battalion, I never imagined I was obliged to be a model to the subs or the junior captains." The tone of banter went, this time, to the quick, and Cave flushed a deep crimson, and said,

"I'm not sorry that my ideas of my duty are different; though, in the present case, I have failed to fulfil it."

"Well, well, there's nothing to grow angry about," said Sewell, laughing, "even though you won't give me my revenge. My present business is to book up," and, as he spoke, he sat down at the table, and drew a roll of papers from his pocket, and laid it before him.

"You distress me greatly by all this, Sewell," said Cave, whose agitation now almost overcame him. "Cannot we hit upon some way? can't we let it lie over? I mean—is there no arrangement by which

this cursed affair can be deferred? You understand me?"

"Not in the least. Such things are never deferred without loss of honour to the man in default. The stake that a man risks is supposed to be in his pocket, otherwise play becomes trade, and accepts all the vicissitudes of trade."

"It's the first time I ever heard them contrasted to the disparagement of honest industry."

"And I call billiards, tennis, whist, and *ecarté*, honest industries too, though I won't call them trades. There, there," said he, laughing at the other's look of displeasure, "don't be afraid; I am not going to preach these doctrines to your young officers, for whose morals you are so much concerned. Sit down here, and just listen to me for one moment."

Cave obeyed, but his face showed in every feature how reluctantly.

"I see, Cave," said Sewell, with a quiet smile—"I see you want to do me a favour—so you shall. I am obliged to own that I am an exception to the theory I have just now enunciated. I staked a thousand pounds, and I had *not* the money in my pocket. Wait a moment—don't interrupt me. I had not the money in gold or bank-notes, but I had it here"—and he touched the papers before him—"in a form equally solvent, only that it required that

he who won the money should be not a mere acquaintance, but a friend—a friend to whom I could speak with freedom and in confidence. This,” said he, “is a bond for twelve hundred pounds, given by my wife’s guardian in satisfaction of a loan once made to him; he was a man of large fortune, which he squandered away recklessly, leaving but a small estate, which he could neither sell nor alienate. Upon this property this is a mortgage. As an old friend of my father-in-law—a very unworthy one, by the way—I could of course not press him for the interest, and, as you will see, it has never been paid; and there is now a balance of some hundred pounds additional against him. Of this I could not speak, for another reason—we are not without the hope of inheriting something by him, and to allude to this matter would be ruinous. Keep this, then. I insist upon it. I declare to you, if you refuse, I will sell it to-morrow to the first money-lender I can find, and send you my debt in hard cash. I’ve been a play man all my life, but never a defaulter.”

There was a tone of proud indignation in the way he spoke that awed Cave to silence; for in good truth he was treating of themes of which he knew nothing whatever: and of the sort of influences which swayed gamblers, of the rules that guided and the conventionalities that bound them, he was profoundly ignorant.

"You'll not get your money, Cave," resumed Sewell, "till this old fellow dies ; but you will be paid at last—of that I can assure you. Indeed, if by any turn of luck I was in funds myself, I'd like to redeem it. All I ask is, therefore, that you'll not dispose of it, but hold it over in your own possession till the day—and I hope it may be an early one—it will be payable."

Cave was in no humour to dispute anything. There was no condition to which he would not have acceded, so heartily ashamed and abashed was he by the position in which he found himself. What he really would have liked best, would have been to refuse the bond altogether, and say, Pay when you like, how you like, or, better still, not at all. This of course was not possible, and he accepted the terms proposed to him at once.

"It shall be all as you wish," said he, hurriedly. "I will do everything you desire ; only let me assure you that I would infinitely rather this paper remained in *your* keeping than in *mine*. I'm a careless fellow about documents," added he, trying to put the matter on the lesser ground of a safe custody. "Well, well, say no more ; you don't wish it, and that's enough."

"I must be able to say," said Sewell, gravely, "that I never lost over night what I had not paid the next morning ; and I will even ask of you to cor-

roborate me, so far as this transaction goes. There were several of your fellows at my house last night; they saw what we played for, and that I was the loser. There will be—there always is—plenty of gossip about these things, and the first question is, ‘Has he booked up?’ I’m sure it’s not asking more than you are ready to do, to say that I paid my debt within twenty-four hours.”

“Certainly; most willingly. I don’t know that any one has a right to question me on the matter.”

“I never said he had. I only warned you how people will talk, and how necessary it is to be prepared to stifle a scandal even before it has flared out.”

“It shall be cared for. I’ll do exactly as you wish,” said Cave, who was too much flurried to know what was asked of him, and to what he was pledged.

“I’m glad this is off my mind,” said Sewell, with a long sigh of relief. “I lay awake half the night thinking of it; for there are scores of fellows who are not of your stamp, and who would be for submitting these documents to their lawyer, and asking, heaven knows, what this affair related to. Now I tell you frankly, I’d have given no explanations. He who gave that bond is, as I know, a consummate rascal, and has robbed me—that is, my wife—out of two-thirds of her fortune; but *my* hands are tied regarding him. I couldn’t touch him, except he

should try to take my life—a thing, by the way, he is quite capable of. Old Dillon, my wife's father, believed him to be the best and truest of men, and my wife inherited this belief, even in the face of all the injuries he had worked us. She went on saying, My father always said, Trust Fossy: there's at least one man in the world that will never deceive you."

"What was the name you said?" asked Cave, quickly.

"Oh, only a nickname. I don't want to mention his name. I have sealed up the bond, with this superscription—'Colonel Sewell's bond.' I did this believing you would not question me farther; but if you desire to read it over, I'll break the envelope at once."

"No, no; nothing of the kind. Leave it just as it is."

"So that," said Sewell, pursuing his former line of thought, "this man not alone defrauded me, but he sowed dissension between me and my wife. Her faith is shaken in him, I have no doubt; but she'll not confess it. Like a genuine woman, she will persist in asserting the convictions she has long ceased to be held by, and quote this stupid letter of her father in the face of every fact.

"I ought not to have got into these things," said Sewell, as he walked impatiently down the room. "These family bedevilments should be kept from

one's friends ; but the murder is out now, and you can see how I stand—and see, besides, that if I am not always able to control my temper, a friend might find an excuse for me.”

Cave gave a kindly nod of assent to this, not wishing, even by a word, to increase the painful embarrassment of the scene.

“Heigh ho !” cried Sewell, throwing himself down in a chair, “there’s one care off my heart, at least ! I can remember a time when a night’s bad luck wouldn’t have cost me five minutes of annoyance ; but nowadays I have got it so hot and so heavy from fortune I begin not to know myself.” Then with a sudden change of tone, he added—“When are you coming out to us again ? Shall we say Tuesday ?”

“We are to be inspected on Tuesday. Trafford writes me that he is coming over with General Halkett—whom, by the way, he calls a Tartar—and says, ‘If the Sewells are within hail, say a kind word to them on my part.’”

“A good sort of fellow, Trafford,” said Sewell, carelessly.

“An excellent fellow—no better living !”

“A very wide-awake one too,” said Sewell, with one eye closed, and a look of intense cunning.

“I never thought so. It is, to my notion, to the want of that faculty he owes every embarrassment he has ever suffered. He is unsuspecting to a fault.”

"It's not the way *I* read him ; though perhaps I think as well of him as *you* do. I'd say that for his years he is one of the very shrewdest young fellows I ever met."

"You astonish me ! May I ask if you know him well ? "

"Our acquaintance is not of very old date, but we saw a good deal of each other at the Cape. We rode out frequently, dined, played, and conversed freely together ; and the impression he made upon me was that every sharp lesson the world had given him he'd pay back one day or other with a compound interest."

"I hope not—I fervently hope not !" cried Cave. "I had rather hear to-morrow that he had been duped and cheated out of half his fortune than learn he had done one act that savoured of the—the——" He stopped, unable to finish, for he could not hit upon the word that might be strong enough for his meaning, and yet not imply an offence.

"Say blackleg. Isn't that what you want ? There's my wife's pony-chaise. I'll get a seat back to the Nest. Good-bye, Cave. If Wednesday is open, give it to us, and tell Trafford I'd be glad to see him."

Cave sat down as the door closed after the other, and tried to recall his thoughts to something like order. What manner of man was that who had just left him ? It was evidently a very mixed nature.

Was it the good or the evil that predominated? Was the unscrupulous tone he displayed the result of a spirit of tolerance, or was it the easy indifference of one who trusted nothing—believed nothing?

Was it possible his estimate of Trafford could be correct? and could this seemingly generous and open manner cover a nature cold, calculating, and treacherous? No, no! *That* he felt to be totally out of the question.

He thought long and intently over the matter, but to no end; and as he arose to deposit the papers left by Sewell in his writing-desk, he felt as unsettled and undecided as when he started on the inquiry.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE RACES ON THE LAWN.

A BRIGHT October morning, with a blue sky and a slight, very slight, feeling of frost in the air, and a gay meeting on foot and horseback on the lawn before the Swan's Nest, made as pretty a picture as a painter of such scenes could desire. I say of such scenes, because in the *tableau de genre* it is the realistic element that must predominate, and the artist's skill is employed in imparting to very commonplace people and costumes whatever poetry can be lent them by light and shade, by happy groupings, and, more than all these, by the insinuation of some incident in which they are the actors—a sort of storied interest pervading the whole canvass, which gives immense pleasure to those who have little taste for the fine arts.

There was plenty of colour even in the landscape. The mountains had put on their autumn suit, and displayed every tint from a pale opal to a deep and

gorgeous purple, while the river ran on in those circling eddies which come to the surface of water under sunshine as naturally as smiles to the face of flattered beauty.

Colonel Sewell had invited the country-side to witness hack-races in his grounds, and the country-side had heartily responded to the invitation. There were the county magnates in grand equipages—an earl with two postilions and outriders, a high sheriff with all his official splendours, squires of lower degree in more composite vehicles, and a large array of jaunting-cars, through all of which figured the red coats of the neighbouring garrison, adding to the scene that tint of warmth in colour so dear to the painter's heart.

The wonderful beauty of the spot, combining as it did heath-clad mountain, and wood, and winding river, with a spreading lake in the distance, dotted with picturesque islands, was well seconded by a glorious autumnal day—one of those days when the very air has something of champagne in its exhilarating quality, and gives to every breath of it a sense of stimulation.

The first three races—they were on the flat—had gone off admirably. They were well contested, well ridden, and the “right horse” the winner. All was contentment, therefore, on every side, to which the interval of a pleasant moment of conviviality gave

hearty assistance, for now came the hour of luncheon; and from the "swells" in the great marquee, and the favoured intimates in the dining-room, to the assembled unknown in the jaunting-cars, merry laughter issued, with clattering of plates and popping of corks, and those commingled sounds of banter and jollity which mark such gatherings.

The great event of the day was, however, yet to come off. It was a hurdle race, to which two stiff fences were to be added, in the shape of double ditches, to test the hunting powers of the horses. The hurdles were to be four feet eight in height, so that the course was by no means a despicable one, even to good cross-country riders. To give increased interest to the race, Sewell himself was to ride, and no small share of eagerness existed amongst the neighbouring gentry to see how the new-comer would distinguish himself in the saddle—some opining he was too long of leg; some, that he was too heavy; some, that men of his age—he was over five-and-thirty—begin to lose nerve; and many going so far as to imply "that he did not look like riding"—a judgment whose vagueness detracts nothing from its force.

"There he goes now, and he sits well down, too!" cried one, as a group of horsemen swept past, one of whom, mounted on a "sharp" pony, led the way, a white Macintosh and loose overalls covering him

from head to foot. They were off to see that the fences were all being properly put up, and in an instant were out of sight.

"I'll back Tom Westenra against Sewell for a twenty-pound note," cried one, standing up on the seat of his car to proclaim the challenge.

"I'll go further," shouted another—"I'll do it for fifty."

"I'll beat you both," cried out a third—"I'll take Tom even against the field."

The object of all this enthusiasm was a smart, clean-shaven little fellow, with a good blue eye and a pleasant countenance, who smoked his cigar on the seat of a drag near, and nodded a friendly recognition to their confidence.

"If Joe Slater was well of his fall, I'd rather have him than any one in the county," said an old farmer, true to a man of his own class and standing.

"Here's one can beat them both!" shouted another; "here's Mr Creagh of Liskmakerry!" and a thin, ruddy-faced, keen-eyed man of about fifty rode by on a low-sized horse, with that especial look of decision in his mouth, and the peculiar puckering about the corners, that seem to belong to those who traffic in horse-flesh, and who, it would appear, however much they may know about horses, understand humanity more thoroughly still.

"Are you going to ride, Creagh?" cried a friend from a high tax-cart.

"Maybe so, if the fences are not too big for me," and a very malicious drollery twinkled in his grey eye.

"Faix, and if they are," said a farmer, "the rest may stay at home."

"I hope you'll ride, Creagh," said the first speaker, "and not let these English fellows take the shine out of us. Yourself and Tom are the only county names on the card."

"Show it to me," said Creagh, listlessly, and he took the printed list in his hand and conned it over, as though it had all been new to him. "They're all soldiers, I see," said he. "It's Major This, and Captain That—Who is the lady?" This question was rapidly called forth by a horsewoman who rode past at an easy canter in the midst of a group of men. She was dressed in a light-grey habit and hat of the same colour, from which a long white feather encircling the hat hung on one side.

"That's Mrs Sewell—what do you think of her riding?"

"If her husband has as neat a hand I'd rather he was out of the course. She knows well what she's about."

"They say there's not her equal in the Park in London."

"That's not Park riding ; that's something very different, take my word for it. She could lead half the men here across the country."

Nor was she unworthy of the praise, as, with her hand low, her head a little forward, but her back well curved in, she sat firmly down in her saddle ; giving to the action of the horse that amount of movement that assisted the animal, but never more. The horse was mettlesome enough to require all her attention. It was his first day under a side-saddle, and he chafed at it, and when the heavy skirt smote his flank, bounded with a lunge and a stroke of his head that showed anger.

"That's a four hundred guinea beast she's on. He belongs to the tall young fellow that's riding on her left."

"I like his own horse better,—the liver-chestnut with the short legs. I wish I had a loan of him for the hurdle race."

"Ask him, Phil ; or get the mistress there to ask him," said another, laughing. "I'm mighty mistaken or he wouldn't refuse *her*."

"Oh, is *that* it?" said Creagh, with a knowing look.

"So they tell me here, for I don't know one of them myself ; but the story goes that she was to have married that young fellow when Sewell carried her off."

"I must go and get a better look at her," said Creagh, as he spurred his horse and cantered away.

"Is any one betting?" said little Westenra, as he descended from his seat on the drag. "I have not seen a man to-day with five pounds on the race."

"Here's Sewell," muttered another; "he's coming up now, and will give or take as much as you like."

"Did you see Mrs Sewell any of you?" asked Sewell, cavalierly, as he rode up with an open telegram in his hand; and as the persons addressed were for the most part his equals, none responded to the insolent demand.

"Could you tell me, sir," said Sewell, quickly altering his tone, while he touched his hat to Westenra, "if Mrs Sewell passed this way?"

"I haven't the honour to know Mrs Sewell, but I saw a lady ride past, about ten minutes ago, on a black thoroughbred."

"Faix, and well she rode him too," broke in an old farmer. "She took the posey out of that young gentleman's button-hole, while her beast was jumping, and stuck it in her breast, as easy as I'm sitting here."

Sewell's face grew purple as he darted a look of savage anger at the speaker, and, turning his horse's head, he dashed out at speed and disappeared.

"Peter Delaney," said Westenra, "I thought you

had more discretion than to tell such a story as that."

"Begorra, Mister Tom ! I didn't know the mischief I was making till I saw the look he gave me !"

It was not till after a considerable search that Sewell came up with his wife's party, who were sauntering leisurely along the river-side, through a gorse-covered slope.

"I've had a devil of a hunt after you !" he cried, as he rode up, and the ringing tone of his voice was enough to intimate to her in what temper he spoke. "I've something to say to you," said he, as though meant for her private ear, and the others drew back, and suffered them to ride on together. "There's a telegram just come from that old beast the Chief Baron ; he desires to see me to-night. The last train leaves at five, and I shall only hit it by going at once. Can't you keep your horse quiet, madam, or must you show off while I'm speaking to you?"

"It was the furze that stung him," said she, coldly, and not showing the slightest resentment at his tone.

"If the old bear means anything short of dying, and leaving me his heir, this message is a shameful swindle."

"Do you mean to go?" asked she, coldly.

"I suppose so ; that is," added he, with a bitter grin, "if I can tear myself away from *you* ;" but she only smiled.

"I'll have to pay forfeit in this match," continued he, "and my book will be all smashed besides. I say," cried he, "would Trafford ride for me?"

"Perhaps he would."

"None of your mock indifference, madam. I can't afford to lose a thousand pounds every time you've a whim. Ay, look astonished if you like! but if you hadn't gone into the billiard-room on Saturday evening and spoiled my match, I'd have escaped that infernal whist-table. Listen to me now! Tell him that I have been sent for suddenly—it might be too great a risk for me to refuse to go—and ask him to ride Crescy; if he says Yes—and he will say yes if you ask him as you *ought*"—her cheek grew crimson as he uttered the last word with a strong emphasis—"tell him to take up my book. Mind you use the words 'take up;' *he'll* understand you."

"But why not say all this yourself?—he's riding close behind at this minute."

"Because I have a wife, madam, who can do it so much better—because I have a wife who plucks a carnation out of a man's coat, and wears it in her bosom, and this on an open race-course, where people can talk of it; and a woman with such rare tact ought to be of service to her husband, eh?" She swayed to and fro in her saddle for an instant as though about to fall, but she grasped the horn with both hands and saved herself.

"Is that all?" muttered she, faintly.

"Not quite. Tell Trafford to come round to my dressing-room, and I'll give him a hint or two about the horse. He must come at once, for I have only time to change my clothes and start. You can make some excuse to the people for my absence; say that the old Judge has had another attack, and I only wish it may be true. Tell them I got a telegram, and *that* may mean anything. Trafford will help you to do the honours, and I'll swear him in as vice-roy before I go. Isn't that all that could be asked of me?" The insolence of his look as he said this made her turn away her head as though sickened and disgusted.

"They want you at the weighing-stand, Colonel Sewell," said a gentleman, riding up.

"Oh, they do! Well, say, please, that I'm coming. Has he given you that black horse?" asked he, in a hurried whisper.

"No; he offered him, but I refused."

"You had no right to refuse; he's strong enough to carry *me*; and the ponies that I saw led round to the stable-yard, whose are they?"

"They are Captain Trafford's."

"You told him you thought them handsome, I suppose, didn't you?"

"Yes, I think them very beautiful."

"Well, don't take them as a present. Win them

if you like at picquet or ecarté—any way you please, but don't take them as a gift, for I heard Westenra say they were meant for you."

She nodded, and as she bent her head, a smile, the very strangest, crossed her features. If it were not that the pervading expression of her face was at the instant melancholy, the look she gave him would have been almost devilish.

"I have something else to say, but I can't remember it."

"You don't know when you'll be back?" asked she, carelessly.

"Of course not—how can I? I can only promise that I'll not arrive unexpectedly, madam; and I take it that's as much as any gentleman can be called on to say. Bye-bye."

"Good-bye," said she, in the same tone.

"I see that Mr Balfour is here. I can't tell who asked him; but mind you don't invite him to luncheon; take no notice of him whatever; he'll not bet a guinea; never plays; never risks anything—even his *affections*!"

"What a creature!"

"Isn't he! There! I'll not detain you from pleasanter company; good-bye; see you here when I come back, I suppose?"

"Most probably," said she, with a smile; and away he rode, at a tearing gallop, for his watch

warned him that he was driven to the last minute.

"My husband has been sent for to town, Captain Trafford," said she, turning her head towards him as he resumed his place at her side; "the Chief Baron desires to see him immediately, and he sets off at once."

"And his race? What's to become of his match?"

"He said I was to ask you to ride for him."

"Me—I ride! Why, I am two stone heavier than he is."

"I suppose he knew that," said she, coldly, and as if the matter was one of complete indifference to her. "I am only delivering a message," continued she, in the same careless tone; "he said, 'Ask Captain Trafford to ride for me, and take up my book;' I was to be particular about the phrase 'take up;' I conclude you will know what meaning to attach to it."

"I suspect I do," said he, with a low soft laugh.

"And I was to add something about hints he was to give you, if you'd go round to his dressing-room at once; indeed, I believe you have little time to spare."

"Yes, I'll go, I'll go now; only there's one thing I'd like to ask—that is—I'd be very glad to know——"

"What is it?" said she, after a pause, in which his confusion seemed to increase with every minute.

"I mean, I should like to know whether you wished me to ride this race or not?"

"Whether *I* wished it?" said she, in a tone of astonishment.

"Well, whether you cared about the matter one way or other?" replied he, in still deeper embarrassment.

"How could it concern me, my dear Captain Trafford?" said she, with an easy smile; "a race never interests me much, and I'd just as soon see Blue and Orange come in as Yellow and Black; but you'll be late if you intend to see my husband; I think you'd better make haste."

"So I will, and I'll be back immediately," said he, not sorry to escape a scene where his confusion was now making him miserable.

"You *are* a very nice horse!" said she, patting the animal's neck, as he chafed to dash off after the other. "I'd like very much to own you; that is, if I ever was to call anything my own."

"They're clearing the course, Mrs Sewell," said one of her companions, riding up; "we had better turn off this way, and ride round to the stand."

"Here's a go!" cried another, coming up at speed.

Big Trafford is going to ride Crescy; he's well-nigh fourteen stone."

"Not thirteen ; I'll lay a tenner on it."

"He can ride a bit," said a third.

"I'd rather he rode his own horse than mine."

"Sewell knows what he's about, depend on't."

"That's his wife," whispered another ; "I'm certain she heard you."

Mrs Sewell turned her head as she cantered along, and, in the strange smile her features wore, seemed to confirm the speaker's words ; but the hurry and bustle of the moment drowned all sense of embarrassment, and the group dashed onward to the stand.

Leaving that heaving, panting, surging tide of humanity for an instant, let us turn to the house, where Sewell was already engaged in preparing for the road.

"You are going to ride for me, Trafford?" said Sewell, as the other entered his dressing-room, where, with the aid of his servant, he was busily packing up for the road.

"I'm not sure ; that is, I don't like to refuse, and I don't see how to accept."

"My wife has told you ; I'm sent for hurriedly."

"Yes."

"Well?" said he, looking round at him from his task.

"Just as I have told you already ; I'd ride for you as well as a heavy fellow could take a light-

weight's place, but I don't understand about your book—am I to stand your engagements?"

"You mean, are you to win all the money I'm sure to pocket on the match?"

"No, I don't mean that," said he, laughing; "I never thought of trading on another man's brains; I simply meant, am I to be responsible for the losses?"

"If you ride Crescy as you ought to ride him, you needn't fret about the losses."

"But suppose that I do not — and the case is a very possible one — that, not knowing your horse——"

"Take this portmanteau down, Bob, and the carpet-bag; I shall only lose my train," said Sewell, with a gesture of hot impatience; and, as the servant left the room, he added, "pray don't think any more about this stupid race; scratch Crescy, and tell my wife that it was a change of mind on *my* part—that I did not wish you to ride; good-bye;" and he waved a hasty adieu with his hand, as though to dismiss him at once.

"If you'll let me ride for you, I'll do my best," blundered out Trafford; "when I spoke of your engagements, it was only to prepare you for what perhaps you were not aware of, that I'm not very well off just now, and that if anything like a heavy sum——"

"You are a most cautious fellow; I only wonder

how you ever did get into a difficulty ; but I'm not the man to lead you astray, and wreck such splendid principles ; adieu ! ”

“ I'll ride, let it end how it may ! ” said Trafford, angrily, and left the room at once, and hurried down-stairs.

Sewell gave a parting look at himself in the glass ; and, as he set his hat jauntily on one side, said, “ There's nothing like a little mock indignation to bully fellows of *his* stamp ; the key-note of their natures is the dread of being thought mean, and particularly of being thought mean by a woman.” He laughed pleasantly at this conceit, and went on his way.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SEWELL ARRIVES IN DUBLIN.

It was late at night when Sewell reached town. An accidental delay to the train deferred the arrival for upwards of an hour after the usual time, and when he reached the Priory the house was all closed for the night, and not a light to be seen.

He knocked, however, and rang boldly; and after a brief delay, and considerable noise of unbolting and unbarring, was admitted. "We gave you up, sir, after twelve o'clock," said the butler, half reproachfully, "and his lordship ordered the servants to bed. Miss Lendrick, however, is in her drawing-room still."

"Is there anything to eat, my good friend? that is what I stand most in need of just now."

"There's a cold rib of beef, sir, and a grouse pie; but if you'd like something hot, I'll call the cook."

"No, no, never mind the cook; you can give me some sherry, I'm sure?"

"Any wine you please, sir. We have excellent madeira, which ain't to be had everywhere nowadays."

"Madeira be it, then; and order a fire in my room. I take it you have a room for me?"

"Yes, sir, all is ready; the bath was hot about an hour ago, and I'll have it refreshed in a minute."

"Now for the grouse pie. By the way, Fenton, what is the matter with his lordship? he wasn't ill, was he, when he sent off that despatch to me?"

"No, sir; he was in Court to-day, and he dined at the Castle, and was in excellent spirits before he went out."

"Has anything gone wrong, then, that he wanted me up so hurriedly?"

"Well, sir, it ain't so easy to say, his lordship excites himself so readily; and mayhap he had words with some of the judges—mayhap with his Excellency, for they're always at him about resigning, little knowing that if they'd only let him alone he'd go of himself, but if they press him he'll stay on these twenty years."

"I don't suspect he has got so many as twenty years before him."

"If he wants to live, sir, he'll do it. Ah, you may laugh, sir, but I have known him all my life, and I never saw the man like him to do the thing he wishes to do."

"Cut me some of that beef, Fenton, and fetch me

some draught beer. How these old tyrants make slaves of their servants," said he, aloud, as the man left the room—"a slavery that enthralls mind as well as body." A gentle tap came to the door, and before Sewell could question the summons, Miss Lendrick entered. She greeted him cordially, and said how anxiously her grandfather had waited for him till midnight. "I don't know when I saw him so eager or so impatient," she said.

"Have you any clue to his reason for sending for me?" said he, as he continued to eat, and assumed an air of perfect unconcern.

"None whatever. He came into my room about two o'clock, and told me to write his message in a good bold hand; he seemed in his usual health, and his manner displayed nothing extraordinary. He questioned me about the time it would take to transmit the message from the town to your house, and seemed satisfied when I said about half-an-hour."

"It's just as likely, perhaps, to be some caprice—some passing fancy."

She shook her head dissentingly, but made no reply.

"I believe the theory of this house is, 'he can do no wrong,'" said Sewell, with a laugh.

"He is so much more able in mind than all around him, such a theory might prevail; but I'll not go so far as to say that it does."

"It's not his mind gives him his pre-eminence,

Miss Lucy—it's his temper; it's that same strong will that overcomes weaker natures by dint of sheer force. The people who assert their own way in life are not the most intellectual, they are only the best bullies."

"You know very little of grandpapa, Colonel Sewell, that's clear."

"Are you so sure of that?" asked he, with a dubious smile.

"I *am* sure of it, or in speaking of him you would never have used such a word as bully."

"You mistake me—mistake me altogether, young lady. I spoke of a class of people who employ certain defects of temper to supply the place of certain gifts of intellect; and if your grandfather, who has no occasion for it, chooses to take a weapon out of their armoury, the worse taste his."

Lucy turned fiercely round, her face flushed and her lip trembling. An angry reply darted through her mind, but she repressed it by a great effort, and in a faint voice she said, "I hope you left Mrs Sewell well?"

"Yes, perfectly well, amusing herself vastly. When I saw her last she had about half-a-dozen young fellows cantering on either side of her, saying, doubtless, all those pleasant things that you ladies like to hear."

Lucy shrugged her shoulders, without answering.

"Telling you," continued he, in the same strain, "that if you are unmarried you are angels, and that if married you are angels and martyrs too; and it is really a subject that requires investigation, how the best of wives is not averse to hearing her husband does not half estimate her. Don't toss you head so impatiently, my dear Miss Lucy; I am giving you the wise precepts of a very thoughtful life."

"I had hoped, Colonel Sewell, that a very thoughtful life might have brought forth pleasanter reflections."

"No, that is precisely what it does not do. To live as long as I have, is to arrive at a point when all the shams have been seen through, and the world exhibits itself pretty much as a stage during a day rehearsal."

"Well, sir, I am too young to profit by such experiences, and I will wish you a very good night—that is, if I can give no orders for anything you wish."

"I have had everything. I will finish this madeira—to your health—and hope to meet you in the morning, as beautiful and as trustful as I see you now—*felice notte*." He bowed as he opened the door for her to pass out, and she went, with a slight bend of the head and a faint smile, and left him.

"How I could make you beat your wings against your cage, for all your bravery, if I had only three days here, and cared to do it," said he, as he poured

the rest of the wine into his glass. "How weary I could make you of this old house and its old owner. Within one month—one short month—I'd have you repeating as wise saws every sneer and every sarcasm that you just now took fire at. And if I am to pass three days in this dreary old dungeon I don't see how I could do better. What can he possibly want with me?" All the imaginable contingencies he could conjure up now passed before his mind. That the old man was sick of solitude, and wanted him to come and live with them; that he was desirous of adopting one of the children, and which of them? then, that he had held some correspondence with Fossbrooke, and wanted some explanations—a bitter pang, that racked and tortured him while he revolved it; and, last of all, he came back to his first guess—it was about his will he had sent for him. He had been struck by the beauty of the children, and asked their names and ages twice or thrice over; doubtless he was bent on making some provision for them. "I wish I could tell him that I'd rather have ten thousand down, than thrice the sum settled on Reginald and the girls. I wish I could explain to him that mine is a ready-money business, and that cash is the secret of success; and I wish I could show him that no profits will stand the reverses of loans raised at two hundred per cent! I wonder how the match went off to-day; I'd like to have the

odds that there were three men down at the double rail and bank." Who got first over the brook, was his next speculation, and where was Trafford? "If he punished Crescy, I think I could tell *that*," muttered he, with a grin of malice. "I only wish I was there to see it;" and in the delight this thought afforded, he tossed off his last glass of wine, and rang for his bedroom candle.

"At what time shall I call you, sir?" asked the butler.

"When are you stirring here—I mean, at what hour does Sir William breakfast?"

"He breakfasts at eight, sir, during term; but he does not expect to see any one but Miss Lucy so early."

"I should think not. Call me at eleven, then, and bring me some coffee and a glass of rum when you come. Do you mean to tell *me*," said he, in a somewhat stern tone, "that the Chief Baron gets up at seven o'clock?"

"In term time, sir, he does, every day."

"Egad! I'm well pleased that I have not a seat on the Bench. I'd not be Lord Chancellor at that price."

"It's very hard on the servants, sir—very hard indeed."

"I suppose it is," said Sewell, with a treacherous twinkle of the eye.

“If it wasn’t that I’m expecting the usher’s place in the Court, I’d have resigned long ago.”

“His lordship’s pleasant temper, however, makes up for everything, Fenton, eh?”

“Yes, sir, that’s true;” and they both laughed heartily at the pleasant conceit; and in this merry humour they went their several ways to bed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MORNING AT THE PRIORY.

SEWELL was awoke from a sound and heavy sleep by the Chief Baron's valet asking if it was his pleasure to see his lordship before he went down to Court, in which case there was not much time to be lost.

"How soon does he go?" asked Sewell, curtly.

"He likes to be on the Bench by eleven exactly, sir, and he has always some business in Chamber first."

"All that tells me nothing, my good friend. How much time have I now to catch him in, before he starts?"

"Half an hour, sir. Forty minutes at most."

"Well, I'll try and do it. Say I'm in my bath, and that I'll be with him immediately."

The man was not well out of the room when Sewell burst out into a torrent of abuse of the old Judge and his ways—"His inordinate vanity, his consummate conceit, to imagine that any activity

of an old worn-out intellect like his could be of service to the public! If he knew but all, he is just as useful in his nightcap as in his wig, and it would be fully as dignified to sleep in his bed as in the Court of Exchequer." While he poured forth this invective, he dressed himself with all possible haste; indeed his ill-temper stimulated his alacrity, and he very soon issued from his room, trying to compose his features into a semblance of pleasure on meeting with his host.

"I hope and trust I have not disturbed you unreasonably," said the Judge, rising from the breakfast-table as Sewell entered. "I know you arrived very late, and I'd have given you a longer sleep if it were in my power."

"An old soldier, my lord, knows how to manage with very little. I am only sorry if I have kept you waiting."

"No man ever presumed to keep me waiting, sir. It is a slight I have yet to experience."

"I mean, my lord, it would have grieved me much, had I occasioned you an inconvenience."

"If you had, sir, it might have reacted injuriously upon yourself."

Sewell bowed submissively, for what he knew not; but he surmised that as there was an opening for regret, there might also be a reason for gratitude; he waited to see if he were right.

“My telegram only told you that I wanted you ; it could not say for what,” continued the Judge, and his voice still retained the metallic ring the late irritation had lent it. “There has been a contested question between the Crown and myself as to the patronage to an office in my Court. I have carried my point. They have yielded. They would have me believe that they have submitted out of deference to myself personally, my age, and long services. I know better, sir. They have taken the opinion of the Solicitor-General in England, who, with no flattering opinion of what is called ‘Irish law,’ has pronounced against them. The gift of the office rests with *me*, and it is my intention to confer it upon *you*.”

“Oh, my lord, I have no words to express my gratitude !”

“Very well, sir, it shall be assumed to have been expressed. The salary is one thousand a-year. The duties are almost nominal.”

“I was going to ask, my lord, whether my education and habits are such as would enable me to discharge these duties ?”

“I respect your conscientious scruple, sir. It is creditable and commendable. Your mind may, however, be at ease. Your immediate predecessor passed the last thirteen years at Tours, in France, and there was never a complaint of official irregu-

larity till, three years ago, when he came over to afford his substitute a brief leave of absence, he forgot to sign his name to certain documents—a mistake the less pardonable that his signature formed his whole and sole official drudgery.”

It was on Sewell’s lips to say, “that if *he* had not signed his name a little too frequently in life, his difficulties would not have been such as they now were.”

“I am afraid I did not catch what you said, sir,” said the Judge.

“I did not speak, my lord,” replied he, bowing.

“You will see, therefore, sir, that the details of your official life need not deter you, although I have little doubt the Ministerial press will comment sharply upon your absence, if you give them the opportunity, and will reflect severely upon your unfitness if they can detect a flaw in you. Is there anything, therefore, in your former life to which these writers can refer—I will not say disparagingly—but unpleasantly?”

“I am not aware, my lord, of anything.”

“Of course, sir, I could not mean what might impugn your honour or affect your fame. I spoke simply of what soldiers are, perhaps, more exposed to than civilians—the lighter scandals of society. You apprehend me?”

“I do, my lord; and I repeat that I have a very

easy conscience on this score: for though I have filled some rather responsible stations at times, and been intrusted with high functions, all my tastes and habits have been so domestic and quiet—I have been so much more a man of home than a man of pleasure—that I have escaped even the common passing criticisms bestowed on people who are before the world.”

“Is this man—this Sir Brook Fossbrooke—one likely to occasion you any trouble?”

“In the first place, my lord, he is out of the country, not very likely to return to it; and secondly, it is not in his power—not in any man’s power—to make me a subject for attack.”

“You are fortunate, sir; more fortunate than men who have served their country longer. It will scarcely be denied what I have contributed to the public service, and yet, sir, *I* have been arraigned before the bar of that insensate jury they call Public Opinion, and it is only in denying the jurisdiction I have deferred the award.”

Sewell responded to the vainglorious outburst by a look of admiring wonder, and the Judge smiled a gracious acceptance of the tribute.

“I gather, therefore, sir, that you can accept this place without fear of what scandal or malignity may assail you by.”

“Yes, my lord, I can say as much with confidence.”

"It is necessary, sir, that I should be satisfied on this head. The very essence of the struggle between the Crown and myself is in the fact that *my* responsibility is pledged, *my* reputation is in bond for the integrity and the efficiency of this officer, and I will not leave to some future biographer of the Irish Chief Barons of the Exchequer the task of apology for one who was certainly not the least eminent of the line."

"Your lordship's high character shall not suffer through me," said Sewell, bowing respectfully.

"The matter, then, is so far settled; perhaps, however, you would like to consult your wife? She might be averse to your leaving the army."

"No, my lord. She wishes—she has long wished it. We are both domestic in our tastes, and we have always been looking to the time when we could live more for each other, and devote ourselves to the education of our children."

"Commendable and praiseworthy," said the Judge, with a half grunt, as though he had heard something of this same domesticity and home-happiness, but that his own experiences scarcely corroborated the report. "There are certain steps you will have to take before leaving the service; it may, then, be better to defer your public nomination to this post till they be taken?"

This, which was said in question, Sewell answered

at once, saying, "There need be no delay on this score, my lord; by this day week I shall be free."

"On this day week, then, you shall be duly sworn in. Now, there is another point—I throw it out simply as a suggestion—you will not receive it as more if you are indisposed to it. It may be some time before you can find a suitable house or be fully satisfied where to settle down. There is ample room here; one entire wing is unoccupied. May I beg to place it at your disposal?"

"Oh, my lord, this is really too much kindness. You overwhelm me with obligations. I have never heard of such generosity."

"Sir, it is not all generosity—I reckon much on the value of your society. Your companionable qualities are gifts I would secure by a 'retainer.'"

"In your society, my lord, the benefits would be all on my side."

"There was a time, sir—I may say it without boastfulness—men thought me an agreeable companion. The three Chiefs, as we were called from our separate Courts, were reputed to be able talkers. I am the sole survivor; and it would be a gain to those who care to look back on the really great days of Ireland, if some record should remain of a time when there were giants in the land. I have myself some very curious materials—masses of let-

ters and suchlike—which we may turn over some winter's evening together.”

Sewell professed his delight at such a prospect, and the Judge then suddenly bethinking himself of the hour—it was already nigh eleven—arose. “Can I set you down anywhere? are you for town?” asked he.

“Yes, my lord; I was about to pay my mother a visit.”

“I'll drop you there; perhaps you would convey a message from me, and say how grateful I should feel if she would give us her company at dinner—say seven o'clock. I will just step up to say good-bye to my granddaughter, and be with you immediately.”

Sewell had not time to bethink him of all the strange events which a few minutes had grouped around him, when the Chief Baron appeared, and they set out.

As they drove along, their converse was most agreeable. Sewell's attentive manner was an admirable stimulant, and the old Judge was actually sorry to lose his companion, as the carriage stopped at Lady Lendrick's door.

“What on earth brought you up, Dudley?” said she, as he entered the room where she sat at breakfast.

“Let me have something to eat, and I'll tell

you," said he, seating himself at table, and drawing towards him a dish of cutlets. "You may imagine what an appetite I have when I tell you whose guest I am."

"Whose?"

"Your husband's."

"You! at the Priory! and how came that to pass?"

"I told you already I must eat before I talk. When I got down-stairs this morning I found the old man just finishing his breakfast, and instead of asking me to join him, he entertained me with the siege of Derry, and some choice anecdotes of Lord Bristol and 'the Volunteers.' This coffee is cold."

"Ring and they'll bring you some."

"If I am to take him as a type of Irish hospitality as well as Irish agreeability, I must say I get rid of two delusions together."

"There's the coffee. Will you have eggs?"

"Yes, and a rasher along with them. You can afford to be liberal with the larder, mother, for I bring you an invitation to dine."

"At the Priory?"

"Yes; he said seven o'clock."

"Who dines there?"

"Himself and his granddaughter and I make the company, I believe."

"Then I shall not go. I never do go when there's not a party."

"He's safer, I suppose, before people?"

"Just so. I could not trust to his temper under the temptation of a family circle. But what brought you to town?"

"He sent for me by telegraph—just, too, when I had the whole county with me, and was booked to ride a match I had made with immense trouble. I got his message—'Come up immediately.' There was not the slightest reason for haste, nor for the telegraph at all. The whole could have been done by letter, and replied to at leisure, besides——"

"What was it then?"

"It is a place he has given me—a Registrarship of something in his Court, that he has been fighting the Castle people about for eighteen years, and to which, heaven knows if he has the right of appointment this minute."

"What's it worth?"

"A thousand a-year net. There were pickings—at least the last man made a good thing of them—but there are to be no more. We are to inaugurate, as the newspapers say, a reign of integrity and incorruptibility."

"So much the better."

"So much the worse," say I. "My motto is, Full batta and plenty of loot; and it's every man's motto,

only that every man is not honest enough to own it."

"And when are you to enter upon the duties of your office?"

"Immediately. I'm to be sworn in—there's an oath, it seems—this day week, and we're to take up our abode at the Priory till we find a house to suit us."

"At the Priory?"

"Yes. May I light a cigarette, mother? only one. He gave the invitation most royally. A whole wing is to be at our disposal. He said nothing about the cook or the wine-cellar, and these are the very ingredients I want to secure."

She shook her head dubiously, but made no answer.

"You don't think, then, that he meant to have us as his guests?"

"I think it unlikely."

"How shall I find out? It's quite certain I'll not go live under his roof—which means his surveillance—without an adequate compensation. I'll only consent to being bored by being fed."

"House-rent is something, however."

"Yes, mother, but not everything. That old man would be inquiring who dined with me, how late he stayed, who came to supper, and what they did afterwards. Now, if he take the whole charge of us, I'll put up with a great deal, because I could manage

a little '*pied à terre*' somewhere about Kingstown or Dalkey, and 'carry on' pleasantly enough. You must find out his intentions, mother, before I commit myself to an acceptance. You must indeed."

"Take my advice, Dudley, and look out for a house at once. You'll not be in *his* three weeks."

"I can submit to a great deal when it suits me, mother," said he, with a derisive smile, and a look of intense treachery at the same time.

"I suppose you can," said she, nodding an assent. "How is she?"

"As usual," said he, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"And the children?"

"They are quite well. By the way, before I forget it, don't let the Judge know that I have already sent in my papers to sell out. I want him to believe that I do so now in consequence of his offer."

"It is not likely we shall soon meet, and I may not have an opportunity of mentioning the matter."

"You'll come to dinner to-day, won't you?"

"No."

"You ought, even out of gratitude on *my* account. It would be only commonly decent to thank him."

"I couldn't."

"Couldn't what? Couldn't come, or couldn't thank him?"

"Couldn't do either. You don't know, Dudley, that whenever our intercourse rises above the com-

mon passing courtesies of mere acquaintanceship, it is certain to end in a quarrel. We must never condemn or approve. We must never venture upon an opinion, lest it lead to a discussion, for discussion means a fight."

"Pleasant, certainly—pleasant and amiable too!"

"It would be better, perhaps, that I had some of that happy disposition of my son," said she, with a cutting tone, "and could submit to whatever suited me."

He started as if he had seen something, and, turning on her a look of passionate anger, began—"Is it from *you* that this should come?" Then suddenly recollecting himself, he subdued his tone, and said, "We'll not do better by losing our tempers. Can you put me in the way to raise a little money? I shall have the payment for my commission in about a fortnight; but I want a couple of hundred pounds at once."

"It's not two months since you raised five hundred."

"I know it, and there's the last of it. I left Lucy ten sovereigns when I came away, and this twenty pounds is all that I now have in the world."

"And all these fine dinners and grand entertainments that I have been told of—what was the meaning of them?"

"They were what the railway people call 'pre-

liminary expenses,' mother. Before one can get fellows to come to a house where there is play there must be a sort of easy style of good living established that all men like: excellent dinners and good wine are the tame elephants, and without them you'll not get the wild ones into your 'compound.'"

"And to tell me that this could pay!"

"Ay, and pay splendidly. If I had three thousand pounds in the world to carry on with, I'd see the old Judge and his rotten place at Jericho before I'd accept it. One needs a little capital, that's all. It's just like blockade-running—you must be able to lose three for one you succeed with."

"I see nothing but ruin—disreputable ruin—in such a course."

"Come down and look at it, mother, and you'll change your mind. You'll own you never saw a better ordered society in your life—the *beau idéal* of a nice country house on a small scale. I admit our *chef* is not a Frenchman, and I have only one fellow out of livery; but the thing is well done, I promise you. As for any serious play, you'll never hear of it—never suspect it—no more than a man turning over Leech's sketches in a dentist's drawing-room suspects there's a fellow getting his eye-tooth extracted in the next room."

"I disapprove of it all, Dudley. It is sure to end ill."

"For that matter, mother, so shall I! All I have asked from Fate this many a year is, a deferred sentence—a long day, my lord—a long day!"

"Tell Sir William I am sorry I can't dine at the Priory to-day. It is one of my cruel-headache days. Say you found me looking very poorly. It puts him in good-humour to hear it; and if you can get away in the evening, come in to tea."

"You will think of this loan I want—won't you?"

"I'll think of it, but I don't know what good thinking will do." She paused, and after a few minutes' silence said, "If you really are serious about taking up your abode at the Priory, you'll have to get rid of the granddaughter."

"We could marry her off easily enough."

"You might, and you mightn't. If she marry to Sir William's satisfaction he'll leave her all he has in the world."

"Egad, he must have a rare taste in a son-in-law if he likes the fellow I'll promote to the place."

"You seem to forget, Dudley, that the young lady has a will of her own. She's a Lendrick too."

"With all my heart, mother. She'll not be a match for Lucy."

"And would *she*——"

"Ay would she," interrupted he, "if her pride as

a woman—if her jealousy, was touched. I have made her do more than that when I wounded her self-love!”

“You are a very amiable husband, I must say.”

“We might be better, perhaps, mother; but I suspect we are pretty much like our neighbours. And it’s positive you won’t come to dinner?”

“No! certainly not.”

“Well, I’ll try and look in at tea-time. You’ll not forget what I spoke of. I shall be in funds in less than three weeks.”

She gave a little incredulous laugh as she said “good-bye!” She had heard of such pledges before, and knew well what faith to attach to them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EVENING AT THE PRIORY.

THE Chief Baron brought his friend Haire back from Court to dine with him. The table had been laid for five, and it was only when Sewell entered the drawing-room that it was known Lady Lendrick had declined the invitation. Sir William heard the apology to the end; he even waited when Sewell concluded, to see if he desired to add anything more, but nothing came.

“In that case,” said he at length, “we’ll order dinner.” That his irritation was extreme needed no close observation to detect, and the bell-rope came down with the pull by which he summoned the servant.

The dinner proceeded drearily enough. None liked to adventure on a remark which might lead to something unpleasant in discussion, and little was spoken on any side. Sewell praised the mutton, and the Chief Baron bowed stiffly. When Haire remarked

that the pale sherry was excellent, he dryly told the butler to "fill Mr Haire's glass;" and though Lucy, with more caution, was silent, she did not escape, for he turned towards her and said, "We have not been favoured with a word from your lips, Miss Lendrick; I hope these neuralgic headaches are not becoming a family affection."

"I am perfectly well, sir," said she, with a smile.

"It is Haire's fault, then," said the Judge, with one of his malicious twinkles of the eye—"all Haire's fault if we are dull. It is ever so with wits, Colonel Sewell; they will not perform to empty benches."

"I don't know whom you call a wit," began Haire.

"My dear friend, the men of pleasantry and happy conceits must no more deny the reputation that attaches to them than must a rich merchant dishonour his bill; nor need a man resent more being called a Wit, than being styled a Poet, a Painter, a Chief Baron, or"—here he waved his hand towards Sewell, and bowing slightly, added—"a Chief Registrar to the Court of Exchequer."

"Oh, have you got the appointment?" said Haire to the Colonel. "I am heartily glad of it. I'm delighted to know it has been given to one of the family."

"As I said a while ago," said the Judge, with a smile of deeper malice, "these witty fellows spare nobody! At the very moment he praises the sherry

he disparages the host. Why should not this place be filled by one of my family, Haire? I call upon you to show cause."

"There's no reason against it. I never said there was. Nay, I was far from satisfied with you on the day you refused my prayer on behalf of one belonging to you."

"Sir, you are travelling out of the record," said the Judge, angrily.

"I can only say," added Haire, "that I wish Colonel Sewell joy with all my heart; and if he'll allow me, I'll do it in a bumper."

"'A reason fair to drink his health again!' That's not the line. How does it go, Lucy? Don't you remember the verse?"

"No, sir; I never heard it."

"'A reason fair—a reason fair.' I declare I believe the newspapers are right. I am losing my memory. One of the scurrilous rascals t'other day said, they saw no reason Justice should be deaf as well as blind. Haire, was that yours?"

"A thousand a-year," muttered Haire to Sewell.

"What is that, Haire?" cried the old Judge. "Do I hear you aright? You utter one thousand things just as good every year?"

"I was speaking of the Registrar's salary," said Haire, half testily.

"A thousand a-year is a pittance—a mere pit-

tance, sir, in a country like England. It is like the place at a window to see a procession. You may gaze on the passing tide of humanity, but must not dare to mix in it."

"And yet papa went half across the globe for it," said Lucy, with a flushed and burning cheek.

"In your father's profession the rewards are less money, Lucy, than the esteem and regard of society. I have ever thought it wise of our rulers not to bestow titles on physicians, but to leave them the unobtrusive and undistinguished comforters of every class and condition. The equal of any—the companion of all."

It was evident that the old Judge was eager for discussion on anything. He had tried in vain to provoke each of his guests, and he was almost irritable at the deference accorded him.

"Do I see you pass the decanter, Colonel Sewell? Are you not drinking any wine?"

"No, my lord."

"Perhaps you like coffee? Don't you think, Lucy, you could give him some?"

"Yes, sir. I shall be delighted."

"Very well. Haire and I will finish this magnum, and then join you in the drawing-room."

Lucy took Sewell's arm and retired. They were scarcely well out of the room when Sewell halted suddenly, and in a voice so artificial that, if Lucy

had been given to suspectfulness, she would have detected at once, said, "Is the Judge always as pleasant and as witty as we saw him to-day?"

"To-day he was very far from himself; something, I'm sure, must have irritated him, for he was not in his usual mood."

"I confess I thought him charming; so full of neat reply, pleasant apropos, and happy quotation."

"He very often has days of all that you have just said, and I am delighted with them."

"What an immense gain to a young girl—of course I mean one whose education and tastes have fitted her for it—to be the companion of such a mind as his! Who is this Mr Haire?"

"A very old friend. I believe he was a school-fellow of grandpapa's."

"Not his equal, I suspect, in ability or knowledge."

"Oh, nothing like it; a most worthy man, respected by every one, and devotedly attached to grandpapa, but not clever."

"The Chief, I remarked, called him witty," said Sewell, with a faint twinkle in his eye.

"It was done in jest. He is fond of fathering on him the smart sayings of the day, and watching his attempts to disown them."

"And Haire likes that?"

"I believe he likes grandpapa in every mood he has."

"What an invaluable friend! I wish to heaven he could find such another for me. I want—there's nothing I want more than some one who would always approve of me."

"Perhaps you might push this fidelity further than grandpapa does," said she, with a smile.

"You mean that it might not always be so easy to applaud *me*."

She only laughed and made no effort to disclaim the assertion.

"Well," said he, with a sigh, "who knows but if I live to be old and rich I may be fortunate enough to have such an accommodating friend? Who are the other 'intimates' here? I ask because we are going to be domesticated also."

"I heard so this morning."

"I hope with pleasure, though you haven't said as much."

"With pleasure, certainly; but with more mis-giving than pleasure."

"Pray explain this."

"Simply that the very quiet life we lead here would not be endurable by people who like the world, and whom the world likes. We never see any one, we never go out, we have not even those second-hand glances at society that people have

who admit gossiping acquaintances; in fact, regard what you have witnessed to-day as a dinner-party, and then fashion for yourself our ordinary life."

"And do *you* like it?"

"I know nothing else, and I am tolerably happy. If papa and Tom were here I should be perfectly happy."

"By Jove! you startle me," said he, throwing away the unlighted cigar he had held for some minutes in his fingers; "I didn't know it was so bad."

"It is possible he may relax for you and Mrs Sewell; indeed, I think it more than likely that he will."

"Ay, but the relaxation might only be in favour of a few more like that old gent we had to-day. No, no—the thing will never work. I see it at once. My mother said we could not possibly stand it three weeks, and I perceive it is your opinion too."

"I did not say so much," said she, smiling.

"Joking apart," said he, in a tone that assuredly bespoke sincerity, "I couldn't stand such a dinner as we had to-day very often. I can bear being bullied, for I was brought up to it. I served on Rolffe's staff in Bombay for four years, and when a man has been an aide-de-camp he knows what being bullied means; but what I could not endure is that

outpouring of conceit mingled with rotten recollections. Another evening of it would kill me."

"I certainly would not advise your coming here at that price," said she, with a gravity almost comical.

"The difficulty is how to get off. He appears to me to resent as an affront everything that differs from his own views."

"He is not accustomed to much contradiction."

"Not to any at all!"

The energy with which he said this made her laugh heartily, and he half smiled at the situation himself.

"They are coming up-stairs," said she; "will you ring for tea?—the bell is beside you."

"Oh, if they're coming I'm off. I promised my mother a short visit this evening. Make my excuses if I am asked for;" and with this he slipped from the room and went his way.

"Where's the Colonel, Lucy? has he gone to bed?"

"No, sir, he has gone to see his mother; he had made some engagement to visit her this evening."

"This new school of politeness is too liberal for my taste. When we were young men, Haire, we would not have ventured to leave the house where we had dined without saluting the host."

"I take it we must keep up with the spirit of our time."

"You mistake, Haire—it is the spirit of our time is in arrear. It is that same spirit lagging behind, and deserting the post it once occupied, makes us seem in default. Let us have the cribbage-board, Lucy. Haire has said all the smart things he means to give us this evening, and I will take my revenge at the only game at which I am his master. Haire, who reads men like a book, Lucy," continued the Chief, as he dealt the cards, "says that our gallant friend will rebel against our humdrum life here. I demur to the opinion—what say you?" But he was now deep in his game, and never heeded the answer.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SEWELL'S TROUBLES.

"A LETTER for you by the post, sir, and his lordship's compliments to say he is waiting breakfast," were the first words which Sewell heard the next morning.

"Waiting breakfast! Tell him not to wait—I mean, make my respects to his lordship, and say I feel very poorly to-day—that I think I'll not get up just yet."

"Would you like to see Dr Beattie, sir?—he's in the drawing-room."

"Nothing of the kind. It's a complaint I caught in India; I manage it myself. Bring me up some coffee and rum in about an hour, and mind don't disturb me on any account till then. What an infernal house!" muttered he, as the man withdrew. "A subaltern called up for morning parade has a better life than this. Nine o'clock only! What can this old ass mean by this pretended activity? Upon

whom can it impose? Who will believe that it signifies a rush whether he lay abed till noon or rose by daybreak?" A gentle tap came to the door, but as he made no reply there came after a pause another a little louder. Sewell still preserved silence, and at last the sound of retiring footsteps along the corridor. "Not if I know it," muttered he to himself as he turned round and fell off asleep again.

"The coffee, sir, and a despatch; shall I sign the receipt for you?" said the servant, as he reappeared about noon.

"Yes; open the window a little, and leave me."

Leaning on his arm he tore open the envelope and glanced at the signature—"Lucy." He then read, "Send down Eccles or Beattie by next train; he is worse." He read and re-read this at least half-a-dozen times over before he bethought him of the letter that lay still unopened on the bed. He now broke the seal; it was also from his wife, dated the preceding evening, and very brief:—

"DEAR DUDLEY,—Captain Trafford has had a severe fall. Crescy balked at the brook and fell afterwards. Trafford was struck on the head as he rose by Mr Creagh's horse. It is feared the skull is fractured. You are much blamed for having asked him to ride a horse so much under his weight.

All have refused to accept their bets but Kinshela the grocer. I have written to Sir H. Trafford, and I telegraphed to him Dr Tobin's opinion, which is not favourable. I suppose you will come back at once: if not, telegraph what you advise to be done. Mr Balfour is here still, but I do not find he is of much use. The veterinary decided Crescy should be shot, as the plate-bone, I think he called it, was fractured; and as he was in great pain I consented. I hope I have done right.—Yours truly,

“LUCY SEWELL.”

“Here's a go! a horse I refused four hundred and fifty for on Tuesday last! I *am* a lucky dog, there's no denying it. I didn't know there was a man in Europe could have made that horse balk his fence. What a rumpus to make about a fellow getting a 'cropper.' My share of the disaster is a deuced deal the worst. I'll never chance on such a horse again. How am I to find either of these men?” muttered he, as he took up the telegram. He rang the bell violently, and scarcely ceased to pull at it till the servant entered.

“Where does Dr Eccles live?”

“Sir Gilbert, sir?”

“Ay, if he be Sir Gilbert.”

“Merrion Square, sir,” said the man reproachfully,

for he thought it rather hard to ignore one of the great celebrities of the land.

"Take this note to him, that I'll write now, and if he be from home go to the other man—what's his name?—Beattie."

"Dr Beattie is coming to dinner to-day, sir," said the servant, thinking to facilitate matters.

"Just do as I tell you, my good fellow, and don't interrupt. If I am to take up my quarters here, you'll all of you have to change some of your present habits." As he spoke he dashed off a few hasty lines, addressing them to Sir Gilbert Eccles or Dr Beattie. "Ask if it's 'all right;' that will be sufficient reply; and now, send me my bath." As he proceeded with his dressing—a very lengthy affair it always was—he canvassed with himself whether or not he ought to take the train and go down to the country with the doctor. Possibly few men in such circumstances would have given the matter a doubt. The poor fellow who had incurred the mishap had been, at his instance, acting for him. Had it not been for Sewell's pressing this task upon him, Trafford would at that moment have been hale and hearty. Sewell knew all this well; he read the event just as nineteen out of every twenty would have read it, but having done so, he proceeded to satisfy himself why all these reasonings should give way to weightier considerations.

First of all, it would not be quite convenient to let the old Judge know anything of these doings in the country. His strait-laced notions might revolt at races and betting rings. It might not be perhaps decorous that a registrar of a high court should be the patron of such sports. These were prudential reasons, which he dilated on for some time. Then came some others more sentimental. It was to a house of doctors and nurses, and gloom and sorrow, he should go back. All these were to him peculiarly distasteful. He should be tremendously "bored" by it all, and being "bored" was to him whatever was least tolerable in life. It was strange that there was one other reason stronger than all these—a reason that really touched him in what was the nearest thing in his nature to heart. He couldn't go back and look at the empty loose-box where his favourite horse once stood, and where he was never to stand more. Crescy—the animal he was so proud of—the horse he counted on for who knows what future triumphs—the first steeplechase horse, he felt convinced, in Ireland, if not in the kingdom—such strength, such power in the loins, such square joints, such courage, should he ever see united again? If there was anything in that man's nature that represented affection, he had it for this horse. He knew well to what advantage he looked when on his back—he knew what admiration and envy it drew upon

him to see him thus mounted. He had won him at billiards from a man who was half-broken-hearted at parting with him, and who offered immense terms rather than lose him.

"He said I'd have no luck with him," muttered Sewell, now in his misery—"and, confound the fellow, he was right. No, I can't go back to look at his empty stall. It would half kill me."

It was very real grief all this; he was as thoroughly heart-sore as it was possible for him to be. He sorrowed for what nothing in his future life could replace to him; and this is a very deep sorrow.

Trafford's misfortune was so much the origin and cause of his own disaster, that he actually thought of him with bitterness. The man who could make Crescy balk! What fate could be too hard for him?

Nor was he quite easy in his mind about that passage in his wife's letter stating that men would not take their bets. Was this meant as reflecting upon him? Was it a censure on him for making Trafford ride a horse beneath his weight? "They get up some stupid cry of that sort," muttered he, "as if I am not the heaviest loser of all. I lose a horse that was worth a score of Traffords."

When dressed, Sewell went down to the garden and lit his cigar. His sorrow had grown calmer, and he began to think that in the new life before him he should have had to give up horses and sport of every

kind. "I must make my book now on this old fellow, and get him to make me his heir. He cares little for his son, and he can be made to care just as little for his granddaughter. That's the only game open to me—a dreary life it promises to be, but it's better than a jail."

The great large wilderness of a garden, stretching away into an orchard at the end, was in itself a place to suggest sombre thoughts—so silent and forsaken did it all appear. The fruit lay thick on the ground uncared for—the artichokes, grown to the height of shrubs, looked monsters of uncouthness; and even in the alleys flower-seeds had fallen and given birth to flowers, which struggled up through the gravel and hung their bright petals over the footway. There was in the neglect, the silence, the uncared-for luxuriance of the place, all that could make a moody man moodier; and as he knocked off the great heads of the tall hollyhocks, he thought, and even said aloud, "This is about as much amusement as such a spot offers."

"Oh no, not so bad as that," said a laughing voice, and Lucy peeped over a laurel-hedge with a rake in her hand, and seemed immensely amused at his discomfiture.

"Where are you?—I mean, how is one to come near you?" said he, trying to laugh, but not successfully.

“Go round yonder by the fish-pond, and you’ll find a wicket. This is *my* garden, and I till it myself.”

“So!” said he, entering a neat little enclosure, with beds of flowers and flowering shrubs, “this is your garden?”

“Yes—what do you think of it?”

“It’s very pretty—it’s very nice. I should like it larger, perhaps.”

“So would I; but, being my own gardener, I find it quite big enough.”

“Why doesn’t the Chief give you a gardener?—he’s rich enough surely.”

“He never cared for gardening himself. Indeed, I think it is the wild confusion of foliage here that he likes. He said to me one day, ‘In *my* old garden a man loses himself in thought. In this trimly kept place one is ever occupied by the melon-frame or the forcing-house.’”

“That’s the dreadful thing about old people; they are ever for making the whims and crotchets of age the rules of life to others. I wonder you bear this so well.”

“I didn’t know that I bore anything,” said she, with a smile.

“That’s true slave doctrine, I must say; and when one does not feel bondage, there’s no more to be said.”

"I suspect I have a great deal more freedom than most girls ; my time is almost all my own, to dispose of as I will. I read or play or walk or work as I feel inclined. If I wish to occupy myself with household matters, I am the mistress here."

"In other words, you are free to do everything that is not worth doing—you lead the life of a nun in a convent, only that you have not even a sister nun to talk to."

"And which are the things you say are worth doing?"

"Would you not care to go out into the world, to mix in society, to go to balls, theatres, fêtes, and such-like? would you not like to ride? I don't mean it for flattery, but would you not like the admiration you would be sure to meet—the sort of homage people render to beauty, the only tribute the world ever paid freely,—are all these not worth something?"

"I am sure they are: they are worth a great deal to those who can enjoy them with a happy heart; but remember, Colonel Sewell, I have a father living in exile, simply to earn a livelihood, and I have a brother toiling for his bread in a strange land; is it likely I could forget these, or is it likely that I could carry such cares about with me, and enjoy the pleasures you tell of?"

"Oh! as for that, I never met the man nor woman either that could bring into the world a mind unbur-

dened by care. You must take life as it is. If I was to wait for a heart at ease before I went into society, I'd have to decline a few dinner-parties. Your only chance of a little respite, besides, is at your age. The misfortunes of life begin as a little drizzle, but become a regular downpour when one gets to *my* time of life. Let me just tell you what this morning brought forth. A letter and then a telegram from my wife, to tell me that my favourite horse—an animal worth five hundred pounds if he was worth five shillings—the truest, bravest, best horse I ever backed—has just been killed by a stupid fellow I got to ride for me. What he did to make the horse refuse his leap, what magic he used, what conjuring trick he performed, I can't tell. With *me* it was enough to show him his fence, and if I wanted it I couldn't have held him back. But this fellow, a dragoon too, and the crack rider of his regiment, contrives to discourage my poor beast, then rushes him at the jump at half speed. I know it was a wideish brook, and they tumbled in, and my horse smashed his blade-bone—of course there was nothing for it but to shoot him."

"How sad! I am really sorry for you."

"And all this came of the old Judge's message, the stupidity of sending me five words in a telegram, instead of writing a proper note, and saying what he wanted. But for that I'd have stayed at home, ridden

my horse, won my match, and spared myself the whole disaster."

"Grandpapa is often very hasty in his decisions, but I believe he seldom sees cause to revoke them."

"The old theory, 'the King can do no wrong,'" said Sewell, with a saucy laugh; "but remember he can often do a deal of mischief incidentally, as it were—as on the present occasion."

"And the rider, what of him? did he escape unhurt?" said she, eager to avoid unpleasant discussion.

"The rider! my dear young lady," said he, with affected slowness—"the rider came to grief. What he did, or how he did it, to throw my poor horse down, is his own secret, and, from what I hear, he is likely to keep it. No, no, don't look so horrified—he's not killed, but I don't suspect he's a long way off it. He got a smashing fall at a fence I'd have backed myself to ride with my hands tied. Ay, and to have my good horse back again, I'd ride in that fashion to-morrow."

"And the poor fellow, where is he now?"

"The poor fellow is receiving the very sweetest of Mrs Sewell's attentions. He is at my house—in all likelihood in my room—not that he is very conscious of all the favours bestowed upon him."

"Oh, don't talk with that pretended indifference. You must be, you cannot help being, deeply sorry for what has happened."

"There can be very little doubt on that score. I've lost such a horse as I never shall own again."

"Pray think of something besides your horse. Who was he? what's his name?"

"A stranger—an Englishman; you never heard of him; and I wish I had never heard of him!"

"What are you smiling at?" said she, after a pause, for he stood as though reflecting, and a very strange half-smile moved his mouth.

"I was just thinking," said he, gravely, "what his younger brother ought to give me; for this fellow was an elder son, and heir to a fine estate too."

She turned an indignant glance towards him, and moved away. He was quickly after her, however, and, laying his hand on her arm, said good-humouredly, "Come, don't be angry with me. I'm sorry, if you like—I'm very sorry for this poor fellow. I won't say that my own loss does not dash my sorrow with a little anger—he was such a horse! and the whole thing was such a blunder! as fair a brook—with a high bank, it's true—but as fair a fence as ever a man rode at, and ground like this we're walking over to take off from."

"Is he in danger?"

"I believe so; here's what my wife says. Oh, I haven't got the letter about me, but it comes to this, I was to send down one of the best doctors by the first train, telling him it was a case of compression or

concussion, which is it? And so I have despatched Beattie, your grandfather's man. I suppose there's no better?"

"But why have you not gone back yourself? he was a friend, was he not?"

"Yes, he was what people would call a friend. I'm like the hare in the fable, I have many friends; but if I must be confidential, I'll tell you why I did *not* go. I had a notion, just as likely to be wrong as right, that the Chief would take offence at his Registrar being a sporting character, and that if I were to absent myself just now, he'd find out the reason, whereas by staying here I could keep all quiet, and when Beattie came back I could square *him*."

"You could what?"

"A thousand pardons for my bit of slang; but the fact is, just as one talks French when he wants to say nothings, one takes to slang when one requires to be shifty. I meant to say, I could manage to make the Doctor hold his tongue."

"Not if grandpapa were to question him."

Sewell smiled, and shook his head in dissent.

"No, no. You're quite mistaken in Dr Beattie; and what's more, you're quite mistaken in grandpapa too, if you imagine that he'll think the better of you for forgetting the claims of friendship."

"There was none."

"Well, of humanity, then! It was in *your* cause

this man suffered, and it is in *your* house he lies ill. I think you ought to be there also."

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure of it. You know the world a great deal better than I do, and you can tell what people will say of your absence; but I think it requires no knowledge of more than one's own nature to feel what is right and proper here."

"Indeed!" said he, reflectingly.

"Don't you agree with me?"

"Perhaps—that is, in part. I suppose what you mean about the world is, that there will be some scandal afloat, the 'young wife' story, and all that sort of balderdash?"

"I really do not understand you."

"You don't?"

"No. Certainly not. What do you mean?"

"Possibly you did not understand me. Well, if I am to go, there's no time to be lost. It's four o'clock already, and the last train leaves at five forty. I will go."

"You are quite right."

"You'll make my excuses to the Chief. You'll tell him that my wife's message was so alarming, that I could not delay my departure. Beattie will probably be back to-morrow, and bring you news of us."

"Won't you write a few lines?"

"I'm not sure,—I'll not promise. I'm a bad pen-

man, but my wife will write, I've no doubt. Say all sorts of affectionate and dutiful things to the Chief for me; tell him I went away in despair at not being able to say good-bye; he likes that style of thing, doesn't he?"

"I don't think he cares much for 'that style of thing,'" said she, with a saucy smile.

"What a capital mimic you are! Do you know I am just beginning to suspect that you are, for all your quiet simplicity of manner, a deuced deep one? Am I right?"

She shook her head, but made no reply.

"Not that I'd like you the less for it," said he eagerly; "on the contrary, we'd understand each other all the better; there's nothing like people talking the same language, eh?"

"I hope you'll not lose your train," said she, looking at her watch; "I am half-past four."

"A broad hint," said he, laughing; "bye-bye—à *bientôt*."

CHAPTER XXXV.

BEATTIE'S RETURN.

THE old Chief sat alone in his dining-room over his wine. If somewhat fatigued by the labours of the day—for the Court had sat late—he showed little of exhaustion; still less was he, as his years might have excused, drowsy or heavy. He sat bolt upright in his chair, and by an occasional gesture of his hand, or motion of his head, seemed as though he were giving assent to some statement he was listening to, or making his comments on it as it proceeded.

The post had brought a letter to Lucy just as dinner was over. It bore the post-mark "Cagliari," and was in her brother's hand, and the old man, with considerate kindness, told her to go to her room and read it. "No, my dear child," said he as she arose to leave the room; "no! I shall not be lonely—where there is memory, there are troops of friends. Come back and tell me your news when you have read your letter."

More than an hour passed over, and he sat there heedless of time. A whole long life was passing in review before him, not connectedly, or in due sequence of events, but in detached scenes and incidents. Now it was some stormy night in the old Irish House, when Flood and Grattan exchanged their terrific denunciations and insults—now it was a brilliant dinner at Ponsonby's, with all the wits of the day—now he was leading the famous Kitty O'Dwyer, the beauty of the Irish Court, to her carriage, amid such a murmur of admiration as made the progress a triumph—or again it was a raw morning of November, and he was driving across the Park to be present at Curran's meeting with Egan.

A violent ring of the hall bell startled him, and before he could inquire the cause a servant had announced Dr Beattie.

"I thought I might be fortunate enough to catch you before bed-hour," said the Doctor, "and I knew you would like to hear some tidings of my mission."

"You have been to—— Where have you been?" said the old Judge, embarrassed between the late flood of his recollections and the sudden start of his arrival.

"To Killaloe, to see that poor fellow who had the severe fall in the hurdle race."

"Ay—to be sure—yes. I remember all now. Give me a moment, however." He nodded his head

twice or thrice, as if concurring with some statement, and then said, "Go on, sir; the Court is with you."

Beattie proceeded to detail the accident and the state of the sufferer—of whom he pronounced favourably—saying that there was no fracture, nor anything worse than severe concussion. "In fact," said he, "were it an hospital case, I'd say there was very little danger."

"And do you mean to tell me, sir," said the Judge, who had followed the narrative with extreme attention, "that the man of birth and blood must succumb in any conflict more readily than the low-born?"

"It's not the individual I was thinking of, so much as his belongings here. What I fear for in the present case is what the patient must confront every day of his convalescence."

Seeing that the Judge waited for some explanation, Beattie began to relate that, as he had started from Dublin the day before, he found himself in the same carriage with the young man's mother, who had been summoned by telegraph to her son's bedside.

"I have met," said he, "in my time, nearly all sorts and conditions of people. Indeed, a doctor's life brings him into contact with more maladies of nature and temperament than diseases of material origin; but anything like this woman I never saw before. To begin: she combined within herself two

qualities that seem opposed to each other—a most lavish candour on the score of herself and her family; and an intense distrust of all the rest of mankind. She told me she was a baronet's wife—how she had married him—where they lived—what his estate was worth—how this young fellow had become, by the death of a brother, the heir to the property—and how his father, indignant at his extravagance, had disentailed the estate, to leave it to a younger son if so disposed. She showed at times the very greatest anxiety about her son's state; but at other moments just as intense an eagerness to learn what schemes and intrigues were being formed against him—who were the people in whose house he then was—what they were—and how he came there. To all my assurances that they were persons in every respect her son's equals, she answered by a toss of the head or a saucy half laugh. 'Irish?' asked she. 'Yes, Irish.' 'I thought so,' rejoined she; 'I told Sir Hugh I was sure of it, though he said there were English Sewells.' From this instant her distrust broke forth. All Ireland had been in a conspiracy against her family for years. She had a brother, she said it with a shiver of horror, who was cruelly beaten by an attorney in Cork for a little passing pleasantry to the man's sister; he had kissed her, or something of the kind, in a railroad carriage; and her cousin—poor dear Cornwallis Merivale—it was in Ireland he

found that creature that got the divorce against him two years since. She went on to say that there had been a plot against her son, in the very neighbourhood where he now lay ill, only a year ago—some intrigue to involve him in a marriage, the whole details of which she threatened me with the first time we should be alone.

“Though at some moments expressing herself in terms of real affection and anxiety about her poor son, she would suddenly break off to speculate on what might happen from his death. ‘You know, Doctor, there is only one more boy, and if his life lapsed, Holt and the Holt estate goes to the Carringtons.’”

“An odious woman, sir—a most odious woman; I only wonder why you continued to travel in the same carriage with her.”

“My profession teaches great tolerance,” said the Doctor, mildly.

“Don’t call tolerance, sir, what there is the better word for, subserviency. I am amazed how you endured this woman.”

“Remember—it is to be remembered—that in my version of her I have condensed the conversation of some hours, and given you, as it were, the substance of much talking; and also, that I have not attempted to convey what certainly was a very perfect manner. She had no small share of good looks, a very sweet

voice, and considerable attraction in point of breeding."

"I will accept none of these as alleviations, sir; her blandishments cannot blind the Court."

"I will not deny their influence upon myself," said Beattie, gently.

"I can understand you, sir," said the Judge, pompously. "The habits of your profession teach you to swallow so much that is nauseous in a sweet vehicle, that you carry the same custom into morals."

Beattie laughed so heartily at the analogy that the old man's good-humour returned to him, and he bade him continue his narrative.

"I have not much more to tell. We reached the house by about eleven o'clock at night, and my fellow-traveller sat in the carriage till I announced her to Mrs Sewell. My own cares called me to the sick-room, and I saw no more of the ladies till this morning, just before I came away."

"She is then domesticated there? She has taken up her quarters at the Sewells' house?"

"Yes. I found her maid, too, had taken possession of Colonel Sewell's dressing-room, and dispossessed a number of his chattels to make room for her own."

"It is a happy thing, a very happy thing for me, that I have not been tried by these ordeals," said the Judge, with a long-drawn breath. "I wonder how Colonel Sewell will endure it."

"I have no means of knowing; he arrived late at night, and was still in bed and asleep when I left."

"You have not told me these people's name?"

"Trafford—Sir Hugh Beecham Trafford, of Holt-Trafford, Staffordshire."

"I have met the man, or rather his father, for it was nigh fifty years ago—an old family, and of Saxon origin; and his wife—who was she?"

"Her name was Merivale: her father, I think, was Governor of Madras."

"If so, sir, she has hereditary claims for impertinence and presumption. Sir Ulysses Merivale enjoyed the proud distinction of being the most insolent man in England. It is well that you have told me who she was, Beattie, for I might have made a very fatal blunder. I was going to write to Sewell to say, 'As this is a great issue, I would advise you to bring down your mother, "special,"' but I recall my intention. Lady Lendrick would have no chance against Lady Trafford. Irish insolence has not the finish of the English article, and we put an alloy of feeling in it that destroys it altogether. Will the young man recover?"

"He is going on favourably, and I see nothing to apprehend, except, indeed, that the indiscretions of his mother may prejudice his case. She is very likely to insist on removing him; she hinted it to me as I took my leave."

"I will write to the Sewells to come up here at once. They shall evacuate the territory, and leave her in possession. As persons closely connected with my family, they must not have this outrage put upon them." He rang the bell violently, and desired the servant to request Miss Lendrick to come to him.

"She is not very well, my lord, and has gone to her room. She told Mrs Beales to serve your lordship's tea when you were ready for it."

"What is this? What does all this mean?" said the old Judge, eagerly; for the idea of any one presuming to be ill without duly apprising him—without the preliminary step of ascertaining that it could not inconvenience him—was more than he was fully prepared for.

"Tell Mrs Beales I want her," said he, as he rose and left the room. Muttering angrily as he went, he ascended the stairs and traversed the long corridor which led to Lucy's room; but before he had reached the door the housekeeper was at his side.

"Miss Lucy said she'd like to see your lordship, if it wasn't too much trouble, my lord."

"I am going to see her. Ask her if I may come in."

"Yes, my lord," said Mrs Beales from the open door. "She is awake."

“My own dear grandpapa,” said Lucy, stretching out her arms to him from her bed, “how good and kind of you to come here!”

“My dear, dear child,” said he, fondly; “tell me you are not ill; tell me that it is a mere passing indisposition.”

“Not even so much, grandpapa. It is simply a headache. I was crying, and I was ashamed that you should see it; and I walked out into the air; and I came back again, trying to look at ease; and my head began to throb and to pain me so, that I thought it best to go to bed. It was a letter I got—a letter from Cagliari. Poor Tom has had the terrible fever of the island. He said nothing about it at first, but now he has relapsed. There are only three lines in his own hand—the rest is from his friend. You shall see what he says. It is very short, and not very hard to read.”

The old man put on his spectacles and read—

“‘My very dear Lucy.’

“Who presumes to address you in this way? Brook Fossbrooke! What! is this the man who is called Sir Brook Fossbrooke? By what means have you become so intimate with a person of his character?”

“I know nothing better, nothing more truly noble and generous, than his character,” said she, holding her temples as she spoke, for the pain of her head

was almost agony. "Do read on—read on, dearest grandpapa."

He turned again to the letter, and read it over in silence till he came to the few words in Tom's hand, which he read aloud:—"Darling Lu—I shall be all right in a week. Don't fret, but write me a long—long"—he had forgotten the word "letter"—"and love me always."

She burst into tears as the old man read the words, for by some strange magic, the syllables of deep affection, uttered by one unmoved, smite the heart with a pang that is actual torture. "I will take this letter down to Beattie, Lucy, and hear what he says of it," said the old man, and left the room.

"Read this, Beattie, and tell me what you say to it," said the Chief Baron, as he handed the Doctor Sir Brook's letter. "I'll tell you of the writer when you have read it."

Beattie read the note in silence, and as he laid it on the table said, "I know the man, and his strange old-fashioned writing would have recalled him without his name."

"And what do you know of him, sir?" asked the Judge, sternly.

"I can tell you the story in three words: He came to consult me one morning, about six or eight months ago. It was about an insurance on his life—a very small sum he wanted to raise, to go out to this very

place he writes from. He got to talk about the project, and I don't exactly know how it came about—I forget the details now—but it ended by my lending him the money myself.”

“What, sir! do you combine usury with physic?”

“On that occasion I appear to have done so,” said Beattie, laughing.

“And you advanced a sum of money to a man whom you saw for the first time, simply on his showing that his life was too insecure to guarantee repayment?”

“That puts the matter a little too nakedly.”

“It puts it truthfully, sir, I apprehend.”

“If you mean that the man impressed me so favourably that I was disposed to do him a small service, you are right.”

“You and I, Beattie, are too old for this impulsive generosity—too old by thirty years! After forty philanthropy should take a chronic form, and never have paroxysms. I think I am correct in my medical language.”

“Your medicine pleases me more than your morality,” said Beattie, laughing; “but to come back to this Sir Brook—I wish you had seen him.”

“Sir, I have seen him, and I have heard of him, and if not at liberty to say what I have heard of him, it is quite enough to state that *my* information cannot corroborate *your* opinion.”

“Well, my lord, the possibility of what I might hear will not shake the stability of what I have seen. Remember that we doctors imagine we read human nature by stronger spectacles than the laity generally.”

“You imagine it, I am aware, sir; but I have met with no such instances of acuteness amongst your co-professionals as would sustain the claim; but why are we wandering from the record? I gave you that letter to read that you might tell me, is this boy’s case a dangerous one?”

“It is a very grave case, no doubt; this is the malaria fever of Sardinia—bad enough with the natives, but worse with strangers. He should be removed to better air at once if he could bear removal.”

“So is it ever with your art,” said the Judge, in a loud declamatory voice. “You know nothing in your difficulties but a piteous entreaty to the unknown resources of nature to assist you. No, sir; I will not hear your defence; there is no issue before the Court. What sort of practitioners have they in this island?”

“Rude enough, I can believe.”

“Could a man of eminence be found to go out there and see him?”

“A man in large practice could not spare the time; but there are men of ability who are not yet in high repute; one of these might be possibly induced.”

“And what might the expense be?”

“A couple of hundred—say three hundred pounds, would perhaps suffice.”

“Go up-stairs and see my granddaughter. She is very nervous and feverish; calm her mind so far as you are able; say that we are concerting measures for her brother’s benefit; and by the time you shall come down again I will have made up my mind what to do.”

Beattie was a valued friend of Lucy’s, and she was glad to see him enter her room, but she would not suffer him to speak of herself; it was of poor Tom alone she would talk. She heard with delight the generous intentions of her grandfather, and exclaimed with rapture,

“This is his real nature, and yet it is only by the little foibles of his temper that the world knows him; but we, Doctor, we, who see him as he is, know how noble-hearted and affectionate he can be!”

“I must hasten back to him,” said Beattie, after a short space; “for should he decide on sending out a doctor, I must lose no time, as I must return to see this young fellow at Killaloe to-morrow.”

“Oh, in my greater anxieties I forgot him! How is he?—can he recover?”

“Yes, I regard him as out of danger—that is, if Lady Trafford can be persuaded not to talk him into a relapse.”

"Lady Trafford! who is she?"

"His mother; she arrived last night."

"And his name is Trafford, and his Christian name Lionel!"

"Lionel Wentworth Trafford. I took it from his dressing-case when I prescribed for him."

Lucy had been leaning on her arm as she spoke, but she now sank slowly backwards and fainted.

It was a long time before consciousness came back, and even then she lay voiceless and motionless; and, though she heard what Beattie said to her, unable to speak to him, or intimate by a gesture that she heard him.

The Doctor needed no confidences—he read the whole story. There are expressions in the human face which have no reference to physical ills; nor are they indications of bodily suffering. He who asked, "Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?" knew how hopeless was his question; and this very despair it is—this sense of an affliction beyond the reach of art—gives a character to the expression which the doctor's eye never fails to discriminate from the look worn by mere malady.

As she lay there motionless, her large eyes looking at him with that expression in which eagerness struggles against debility, he saw how he had become her confidant.

"Come, my dear child," said he, taking her hand

between both his own, "you have no occasion for fears on this score—so far I assure you, on my honour."

She gave his hand a slight, a very slight, pressure, and tried to say something, but could not.

"I will go down now, and see what is to be done about your brother;" she nodded, and he continued, "I will pay you another visit to-morrow early, before I leave town, and let me find you strong and hearty; and remember, that though I force no confidences, Lucy, I will not refuse them if you offer."

"I have none, sir—none," said she, in a voice of deep melancholy.

"So that I know all that is to be known?" asked he.

"All, sir," said she, with a trembling lip.

"Well, accept me as a friend whom you may trust, my dear Lucy. If you want me I will not fail you; and if you have no need of me, there is nothing that has passed to-day between us ever to be remembered—you understand me?"

"I do, sir. You will come to-morrow—won't you?"

He nodded assent, and left her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN EXIT.

COLONEL SEWELL stood at the window of a small drawing-room he called "his own," watching the details of loading a very cumbrous travelling-carriage which was drawn up before the door. Though the postilions were in the saddle, and all ready for a start, the process of putting up the luggage went on but slowly—now, a heavy imperial would be carried out, and after a while taken in again; dressing-boxes carefully stowed away would be disinterred to be searched for some missing article; bags, baskets, and boxes of every shape and sort came and went and came again; and although the two footmen who assisted these operations showed in various ways what length of training had taught them to submit to in the way of worry and caprice, the smart "maid," who now and then appeared to give some order, displayed most unmistakable signs of ill-humour on her face. "Drat those dogs! I wish

they were down the river!" cried she, of two yelping, barking Maltese terriers, which, with small bells jingling on their collars, made an uproar that was perfectly deafening.

"Well, Miss Morris, if it would oblige *you*——" said one of the tall footmen as he caressed his whisker, and gave a very languishing look, more than enough, he thought, to supply the words wanting to his sentence.

"It would oblige *me* very much, Mr George, to get away out of this horrid place. I never did—no, never—in all my life, pass such a ten days."

"We ain't a-going just yet, after all," said footman number two, with a faint yawn.

"It's so like you, Mr Breggis, to say something disagreeable," said she, with a toss of her head.

"It's because it's true I say it, not because it's onpleasant, Miss Caroline."

"I'm not Miss Caroline, at least from you, Mr Breggis."

"Ain't she haughty—ain't she fierce?" But his colleague would not assent to this judgment, and looked at her with a longing admiration.

"There's her bell again," cried the girl; "as sure as I live she's rung forty times this morning," and she hurried back to the house.

"Why do you think we're not off yet?" asked George.

"It's the way I heerd her talking that shows me," replied the other. "Whenever she's really about to leave a place she goes into them fits of laughing and crying and screaming one minute, and a-whimp-ering the next; and then she tells the people—as it were, unknownst to her—how she hated them all—how stingy they was—the shameful way they starved the servants, and suchlike. There's some as won't let her into their houses by reason of them fits, for she'll plump out everything she knows of a family—who ran away with the Missis, and why the second daughter went over to France."

"You know her better than me, Breggis."

"I do think I does; it's eight years I've had of it. Eh, what's that—wasn't that a screech?" and as he spoke a wild shrill scream resounded through the house, followed by a rapid succession of notes that might either have been laughter or crying.

Sewell drew the curtain; and wheeling an arm-chair to the fireside, lit his cigar, and began to smoke.

The house was so small that the noises could be heard easily in every part of it; and for a time the rapid passage of persons overhead, and the voices of many speaking together, could be detected, and, above these, a wild shriek would now and then rise above all, and ring through the house. Sewell smoked on undisturbed; it was not easy to say that

he so much as heard these sounds. His indolent attitude, and his seeming enjoyment of his cigar, indicated perfect composure; nor even when the door opened, and his wife entered the room, did he turn his head to see who it was.

"Can William have the pony to go into town?" asked she, in a half submissive voice.

"For what?"

"To tell Dr Tobin to come out; Lady Trafford is taken ill."

"He can go on foot; I may want the pony."

"She is alarmingly ill, I fear—very violent spasms; and I don't think there is any time to be lost."

"Nobody that makes such a row as that can be in any real danger."

"She is in great pain at all events."

"Send one of her own people—despatch one of the postboys—do what you like, only don't bore *me*."

She was turning to leave the room, when he called out—"I say, when the attack came on did she take the opportunity to tell you any pleasant little facts about yourself or your family?" She smiled faintly, and moved towards the door. "Can't you tell me, ma'am? has this woman been condoling with you over your hard fate and your bad husband? or has she discovered how that 'dear boy' up-stairs broke his head as well as his heart in your service?"

"She did ask me certainly if there wasn't a great friendship between you and her son," said she, with a tone of quiet disdain.

"And what did you reply?" said he, throwing one leg over the arm of the chair as he swung round to face her.

"I don't well remember. I may have said *you* liked *him*, or that *he* liked *you*. It was such a commonplace reply I made I forget it."

"And was that all that passed on the subject?"

"I think I'd better send for the doctor," said she, and left the room before he could stop her, though that such was his intention was evident from the way he arose from his chair with a sudden spring.

"You shall hear more of this, madam—by Heaven you shall!" muttered he, as he paced the room with rapid steps. "Who's that? come in," cried he, as a knock came to the door. "Oh, Balfour! is it you?"

"Yes; what the deuce is going on up-stairs? Lady Trafford appears to have gone mad."

"Indeed! how unpleasant!"

"Very unpleasant for your wife, I take it. She has been saying all sorts of unmannerly things to her this last hour—things that, if she weren't out of her reason, she ought to be thrown out of the window for."

"And why didn't you do so?"

"It was a liberty I couldn't think of taking in another man's house."

"Lord love you, I'd have thought nothing of it! I'm the best-natured fellow breathing. What was it she said?"

"I don't know how I can repeat them."

"Oh, I see, they reflect on *me*. My dear young friend, when you live to my age you will learn that anything can be said to anybody, provided it only be done by 'the third party.' Whatever the law rejects as evidence assumes in social life the value of friendly admonition. Go on and tell me who it is in love with my wife."

Cool as Mr Cholmondely Balfour was, the tone of this demand staggered him.

"Art thou the man, Balfour?" said Sewell at last, staring at him with a mock frown.

"No, by Jove! I never presumed that far."

"It's the sick fellow, then, is the culprit?"

"So his mother opines. She is an awful woman! I was sitting with your wife in the small drawing-room when she burst into the room and cried out, 'Mrs Sewell, is your name Lucy? for, if so, my son has been rambling on about you this last hour in a wonderful way: he has told me about fifty times that he wants to see you before he dies; and now that the doctor says he is out of danger he never ceases talking of dying. I suppose you have no

objection to the interview ; at least they tell me you were constantly in his room before my arrival.”

“How did my wife take this?—what did she say?” asked Sewell, with an easy smile as he spoke.

“She said something about agitation or anxiety serving to excuse conduct which otherwise would be unpardonable ; and she asked me to send her maid to her—as I think, to get me away.”

“Of course you rang the bell and sat down again.”

“No : she gave me a look that said, I don’t want you here, and I went ; but the storm broke out again as I closed the door, and I heard Lady Trafford’s voice raised to a scream as I came down-stairs.”

“It all shows what I have said over and over again,” said Sewell, slowly, “that whenever a man has a grudge or a grievance against a woman, he ought always to get another woman to torture her. I’ll lay you fifty pounds Lady Trafford cut deeper into my wife’s flesh by her two or three impertinences than if I had stormed myself into an apoplexy.”

“And don’t you mean to turn her out of the house?”

“Turn whom out?”

“Lady Trafford, of course.”

“It’s not so easily done, I suspect. I’ll take to the long-boat myself one of these days, and leave her in command of the ship.”

“I tell you she’s a dangerous, a very dangerous woman ; she has been ransacking her son’s desk, and

has come upon all sorts of ugly memoranda—sums lost at play, and reminders to meet bills, and such-like.”

“Yes; he was very unlucky of late,” said Sewell, coldly.

“And there was something like a will, too; at least there was a packet of trinkets tied up in a paper, which purported to be a will, but only bore the name Lucy.”

“How delicate! there’s something touching in that, Balfour; isn’t there?” said Sewell, with a grin. “How wonderfully you seem to have got up the case. You know the whole story. How did you manage it?”

“My fellow Paxley had it from Lady Trafford’s maid. She told him that her mistress was determined to show all her son’s papers to the Chief Baron, and blow you sky high.”

“That’s awkward, certainly,” said Sewell, in deep thought. “It would be a devil of a conflagration if two such combustibles came together. I’d rather she’d fight it out with my mother.”

“Have you sent in your papers to the Horse Guards?”

“Yes; it’s all finished. I am gazetted out, or I shall be on Tuesday.”

“I’m sorry for it. Not that it signifies much as to this registrarship. We never intended to relinquish our right to it; we mean to throw the case into

Chancery, and we have one issue already to submit to trial at bar."

"Who are *we* that are going to do all this?"

"The Crown," said Balfour, haughtily.

"*Ego et rex meus*; that's the style, is it? Come now, Balfy, if you're for a bet, I'll back my horse, the Chief Baron, against the field. Give me sporting odds, for he's aged, and must run in bandages besides."

"That woman's coming here at this moment was most unlucky."

"Of course it was; it wouldn't be *my* lot if it were anything else. I say," cried he, starting up, and approaching the window, "what's up now?"

"She's going at last, I really believe."

The sound of many and heavy footsteps was now heard descending the stair slowly, and immediately after two men issued from the door, carrying young Trafford on a chair; his arms hung listlessly at his side, and his head was supported by his servant.

"I wonder whose doing is this? has the doctor given his concurrence to it? how are they to get him into the coach? and what are they to do with him when he is there?" Such was the running commentary Balfour kept up all the time they were engaged in depositing the sick man in the carriage. Again a long pause of inaction ensued, and at last a tap came to the door of the room, and a servant inquired for Mr Balfour.

“There!” cried Sewell, “it’s *your* turn now. I only hope she’ll insist on your accompanying her to town.”

Balfour hurried out, and was seen soon afterwards escorting Lady Trafford to the carriage. Whether it was that she was not yet decided as to her departure, or that she had so many injunctions to give before going, the eventful moment was long delayed. She twice tried the seat in the carriage, once with cushions and then without. She next made Balfour try whether it might not be possible to have a sort of inclined plane to lie upon. At length she seemed overcome with her exertions, sent for a chair, and had a glass of water given her, to which her maid added certain drops from a phial.

“You will tell Colonel Sewell all I have said, Mr Balfour,” said she, aloud, as she prepared to enter the carriage. “It would have been more agreeable to me had he given me the opportunity of saying it to himself, but his peculiar notions on the duties of a host have prevented this. As to Mrs Sewell, I hope and believe I have sufficiently explained myself. She at least knows my sentiments as to what goes on in this house. Of course, sir, it is very agreeable to *you*. Men of pleasure are not persons to be overburdened with scruples—least of all such scruples as interfere with self-indulgence. This sort of life is therefore charming; I leave you to all its delights, sir, and do

not even warn you against its dangers. I will not promise the same discretion, however, when I go hence. I owe it to all mothers who have sons, Mr Balfour—I owe it to every family in which there is a name to be transmitted, and a fortune to be handed down, to declare what I have witnessed under this roof. No, Lionel; no, my dear boy; nothing shall prevent my speaking out.” This was addressed to her son, who by a deep sigh seemed to protest against the sentiments he was not able to oppose. “It may suit Mr Balfour’s habits, or his tastes, to remain here—with these I have nothing to do. The Duke of Bayswater might, possibly, think his heir could keep better company—with that I have no concern; though when the matter comes to be discussed before me—as it one day will, I have no doubt—I shall hold myself free to state my opinion. Good-bye, sir; you will, perhaps, do me the favour to call at the Bilton; I shall remain till Saturday there; I have resolved not to leave Ireland till I see the Viceroy; and also have a meeting with this Judge, I forget his name, Lam—Lem—what is it? He is the Chief something, and easily found.”

A few very energetic words, uttered so low as to be inaudible to all but Balfour himself, closed this address.

“On my word of honour—on my sacred word of honour—Mr Balfour,” said she aloud, as she placed

one foot on the step, "Caroline saw it—saw it with her own eyes. Don't forget all I have said; don't drop that envelope; be sure you come to see me." And she was gone.

"Give me five minutes to recover myself," said Balfour, as he entered Sewell's room, and threw himself on a sofa; "such a 'breather' as that I have not had for many a day."

"I heard a good deal of it," said Sewell, coolly. "She screams, particularly when she means to be confidential; and all that about my wife must have reached the gardener in the shrubbery. Where is she off to?"

"To Dublin. She means to see his Excellency and the Chief Baron; she says she can't leave Ireland till she has unmasked all your wickedness."

"She had better take a house on a lease then; did you tell her so?"

"I did nothing but listen—I never interposed a word. Indeed, she won't let one speak."

"I'd give ten pounds to see her with the Chief Baron. It would be such a 'close thing.' All his neat sparring would go for nothing against her; for though she hits wide, she can stand a deal of punishment without feeling it."

"She'll do you mischief there."

"She might," said he, more thoughtfully. "I think I'll set my mother at her; not that she'll have a

chance, but just for the fun of the thing. What's the letter in your hand?"

"Oh, a commission she gave me. I was to distribute this amongst your household," and he drew forth a bank-note. "Twenty pounds! you have no objection to it, have you?"

"I know nothing about it; of course you never hinted such a thing to me;" and with this he arose and left the room.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A STORMY MOMENT.

WITHIN a week after the first letter came a second from Cagliari. It was but half-a-dozen lines from Tom himself. "They are sending me off to a place called Maddalena, dearest Lucy, for change of air. The priest has given me his house, and I am to be Robinson Crusoe there, with an old hag for Friday—how I wish for you! Sir Brook can only come over to me occasionally. Look out for three rocks—they call them islands—off the N.E. of Sardinia; one of them is mine.—Ever your own, TOM L."

Lucy hastened down with this letter in her hand to her grandfather's room; but met Mr Haire on the stairs, who whispered in her ear, "Don't go in just yet, my dear; he is out of sorts this morning; Lady Lendrick has been here, and a number of unpleasant letters have arrived, and it is better not to disturb him further."

"Will you take this note," said she, "and give it

to him at any fitting moment? I want to know what I shall reply—I mean, I'd like to hear if grandpapa has any kind message to send the poor fellow."

"Leave it with me. I'll take charge of it, and come up to tell you when you can see the Judge." Thus saying, he passed on, and entered the room where the Chief Baron was sitting. The curtains were closely drawn, and in one of the windows the shutters were closed—so sensitive to light was the old man in his periods of excitement. He lay back in a deep chair, his eyes closed, his face slightly flushed, breathing heavily, and the fingers of one hand twitching slightly at moments; the other was held by Beattie, as he counted the pulse. "Dip that handkerchief in the cold lotion, and lay it over his forehead," whispered Beattie to Haire.

"Speak out, sir; that muttering jars on my nerves, and irritates me," said the Judge, in a slow firm tone.

"Come," said Beattie, cheerfully, "you are better now; the weakness has passed off."

"There is no weakness in the case, sir," said the old man, sitting bolt upright in the chair, as he grasped and supported himself by the arms. "It is the ignoble feature of your art to be materialist. You can see nothing in humanity but a nervous cord and a circulation."

"The doctor's ministry goes no further," said Beattie, gently.

"Your art is then but left-handed, sir. Where's Haire?"

"Here, at your side," replied Haire.

"I must finish my story, Haire. Where was it that I left off? Yes; to be sure—I remember now. This boy of Sewell's—Reginald Victor Sewell—was with my permission to take the name of Lendrick, and be called Reginald Victor Sewell Lendrick."

"And become the head of your house?"

"The head of my house, and my heir. She did not say so, but she could not mean anything short of it."

"What has your son done to deserve this?" asked Haire, bluntly.

"My son's rights, sir, extend but to the modest fortune I inherited from my father. Whatever other property I possess has been acquired by my own ability and labour, and is mine to dispose of."

"I suppose there are other rights as well as those of the statute-book?"

"Listen to this, Beattie," cried the old Judge, with a sparkle of the eye—"listen to this dialectician, who discourses to me on the import of a word. It is not generous, I must say, to come down with all the vigour of his bright, unburdened faculties upon a poor, weak, and suffering object like myself. You

might have waited, Haire, till I had at least the semblance of power to resist you."

"What answer did you give her?" asked Haire, bluntly.

"I said—what it is always safe to say—'Le roi s'avisera.' Eh, Beattie? this is the grand principle of your own craft. Medicine is very little else than 'the wisdom of waiting.' I told her," continued he, "I would think of it—that I would see the child. 'He is here,' said she, rising and leaving the room, and in a few moments returned, leading a little boy by the hand—a very noble-looking child, I will say, with a lofty head and a bold brow. He met me as might a prince, and gave his hand as though it were an honour he bestowed. What a conscious power there is in youth! Ay, sirs, that is the real source of all the much-boasted vigour and high-heartedness. Beattie will tell us some story of arterial action or nervous expansion; but the mystery lies deeper. The conscious force of a future development imparts a vigour that all the triumphs of after life pale before."

"'Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum,' " said Haire—"I'd not provide for people out of my own family."

"It is a very neat though literal translation, sir, and, like all that comes from you, pointed and forcible."

"I'd rather be fair and honest than either," said Haire, bluntly.

"I appeal to you, Beattie, and I ask if I have deserved this;" and the old Judge spoke with an air of such apparent sincerity as actually to impose upon the Doctor. "The sarcasms of this man push my regard for him to the last intrenchment."

"Haire never meant it; he never intended to reflect upon you," said Beattie, in a low tone.

"He knows well enough that I did not," said Haire, half sulky; for he thought the Chief was pushing his raillery too far.

"I'm satisfied," said the Judge, with a sigh. "I suppose he can't help it. There are fencers who never believe they have touched you till they see the blood. Be it so; and now to go back. She went away and left the child with me, promising to take him up after paying a visit she had to make in the neighbourhood. I was not sorry to have the little fellow's company. He was most agreeable, and, unlike Haire, he never made me his butt. Well, I have done; I will say no more on that head. I was actually sorry when she came to fetch him, and I believe I said so. What does that grunt mean, Haire?"

"I did not speak."

"No, sir; but you uttered what implied an ironical assent—a *nisi prius* trick—like the leer I have

seen you bestow upon the jury-box. How hard it is for the cunning man to divest himself of the subtlety of his calling!"

"I want to hear how it all ended," muttered Haire.

"You shall hear, sir, if you will vouchsafe me a little patience. When men are in the full vigour of their faculties, they should be tolerant to those foot-sore and weary travellers who, like myself, halt behind and delay the march. But bear in mind, Haire, I was not always thus. There was a time when I walked in the van. Ay, sir, and bore myself bravely, too. I was talking with that child when they announced Mr Balfour, the private secretary, a man most distasteful to me; but I told them to show him in, curious indeed to hear what new form of compromise they were about to propose to me. He had come with a secret and confidential message from the Viceroy, and really seemed distressed at having to speak before a child of six years old, so mysterious and reserved was he. He made a very long story of it—full an hour; but the substance was this: The Crown had been advised to dispute my right of appointment to the registrarship, and to make a case for a jury; but—mark the 'but'—in consideration for my high name and great services, and in deference to what I might be supposed to feel from an open collision with the Government, they were still willing for an accommodation, and would

consent to ratify any appointment I should make, other than that of the gentleman I had already named—Colonel Sewell.

“Self-control is not exactly the quality for which my friends give me most credit. Haire, there, will tell you I am a man of ungovernable temper, and who never even tried to curb his passion; but I would hope there is some injustice in this award. I became a perfect dove in gentleness, as I asked Balfour for the reasons which compelled his Excellency to make my step-son’s exclusion from office a condition. ‘I am not at liberty to state them,’ was the cool reply. ‘They are personal, and of course delicate?’ asked I, in a tone of submission, and he gave a half assent in silence. I concurred—that is, I yielded the point. I went even further. I hinted, vaguely of course, at the courteous reserve by which his Excellency was willing to spare me such pain as an unpleasant disclosure—if there were such—might occasion me. I added, that old men are not good subjects for shocks; and I will say, sirs, that he looked at me as I spoke with a compassionate pity which won all my gratitude! Ay, Beattie, and though my veins swelled at the temples, and I felt a strange rushing sound in my ears, I had no fit, and in a moment or two was as calm as I am this instant.

“‘Let me be clear upon this point,’ said I to him.

‘I am to nominate to the office any one except Sewell, and you will confirm such nomination?’ ‘Precisely,’ replied he. ‘Such act on my part in no way to prejudice whatever claim I lay to the appointment in perpetuity, or jeopardise any rights I now assert?’ ‘Certainly not,’ said he. ‘Write it,’ said I, pushing towards him a pen and paper; and so overjoyed was he with his victorious negotiation, that he wrote, word for word, as I dictated. When I came to the name Sewell, I added, ‘To whose nomination his Excellency demurs, on grounds of character and conduct sufficient in his Excellency’s estimation to warrant such exclusion; but which, out of deference to the Chief Baron’s feelings, are not set forth in this negotiation.’ ‘Is this necessary?’ asked he, as he finished writing. ‘It is,’ was my reply; ‘put your name at foot, and the date,’ and he did so.

“I now read over the whole aloud; he winced at the concluding lines, and said, ‘I had rather, with your permission, erase these last words; for though I know the whole story, and believe it too, there’s no occasion for entering upon it here.’

“As he spoke, I folded the paper and placed it in my pocket. ‘Now, sir,’ said I, ‘let *me* hear the story you speak of.’ ‘I cannot. I told you before I was not at liberty to repeat it.’ I insisted, and he refused. There was a positive altercation between us, and he raised his voice in anger, and demanded back.

from me the paper, which he said I had tricked him into writing. I will not say that he meant to use force, but he sprang from his chair and came towards me with such an air of menace, that the boy, who was playing in the corner, rushed at him, and struck him with his drumstick, saying, 'You shan't beat grandpapa !' I believe I rang the bell ; yes, I rang the bell sharply. The child was crying when they came. I was confused and flurried. Bal-four was gone."

"And the paper?" asked Haire.

"The paper is here, sir," said he, touching his breast-pocket. "The country shall ring with it, or such submission shall I exact as will bring that Viceroy and his minions to my feet in abject contrition. Were you to ask me now, I know not what terms I would accept of."

"I would rather you said no more at present," said Beattie. "You need rest and quietness."

"I need reparation and satisfaction, sir ; that is what I need."

"Of course—of course ; but you must be strong and well to enforce it," said Beattie.

"I told Lady Lendrick to leave the child with me. She said she would bring him back to-morrow. I like the boy. What does my pulse say, Beattie?"

"It says that all this talking and agitation are injurious to you—that you must be left alone."

The old man sighed faintly, but did not speak.

“Haire and I will take a turn in the garden, and be within call if you want us,” said Beattie.

“Wait a moment—what was it I had to say? You are too abrupt, Beattie: you snap the cords of thought by such rough handling, and we old men lose our dexterous knack of catching the loose ends, as we once did. There, there—leave me now; the skein is all tangled in hopeless confusion.” He waved his hand in farewell, and they left him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A LADY'S LETTER.

"LUCY asked me to show him this note from her brother," said Haire, as he strolled with Beattie down the lawn. "It was no time to do so. Look over it and say what you advise."

"The boy wants a nurse, not a doctor," said Beattie. "A little care and generous diet would soon bring him round; but they are a strange race these Lendricks. They have all the stern qualities that brave danger, and they are terribly sensitive to some small wound to their self-love. Let that young fellow, for instance, only begin to feel that he is forgotten or an outcast, and he'll droop at once. A few kind words, and a voice he loved, *now*, will do more than all my art could replace a little later."

"You mean that we ought to have him back here?" asked Haire, bluntly.

"I mean that he ought to be where he can be carefully and kindly treated."

"I'll tell the Chief you think so. I'll say that you dropped the remark to myself, of course—never meaning to dictate anything to *him*."

Beattie shook his head in sign of doubt.

"I know him well, better perhaps than any one, and I know there's no more generous man breathing; but he must not be coerced—he must not be even influenced, where the question be one for a decision. As he said to me one day—'I want the evidence, sir. I don't want your speech to it.'"

"There's the evidence, then," said Beattie—"that note with its wavering letters, weak and uncertain as the fingers that traced them—show him that. Say, if you like, that I read it, and thought the lad's case critical. If, after that, he wishes to talk to me on the subject, I'm ready to state my opinion. If the boy be like his father, a few tender words and a little show of interest for him will be worth all the tonics that ever were brewed."

"It's the grandfather's nature too; but the world has never known it—probably never will know it," said Haire.

"In that I agree with you," said Beattie, dryly.

"He regards it as a sort of weakness when people discover any act of generosity or any trait of kindness about him; and do you know," added he, confidentially, "I have often thought that what the world regarded as irritability and sharpness was

nothing more nor less than shyness—just shyness.”

“I certainly never suspected that he was the victim of that quality.”

“No, I imagine not. A man must know him as I do to understand it. I remember one day, long, long ago, I went so far as to throw out a half hint that I thought he laboured under this defect: he only smiled and said, ‘You suspect me of diffidence. I am diffident—no man more so, sir; but it is of the good or great qualities in other men.’ Wasn’t that a strange reply? I never very clearly understood it—do you?”

“I suspect I do; but here comes a message to us.”

Haire spoke a word with the servant, and then turning to Beattie, said—“He wants to see me. I’ll just step in, and be back in a moment.”

Beattie promised not to leave till he returned, and strolled along by the side of a little brook which meandered tastefully through the greensward. He had fallen into a reverie—a curious inquiry within himself whether it were a boon or an evil for a man to have acquired that sort of influence over another mind which makes his every act and word seem praiseworthy and excellent. “I wonder is the Chief the better or the worse for this indiscriminating attachment? Does it suggest a standard to attain

to? or does it merely minister to self-love and conceit? Which is it? which is it?" cried he aloud, as he stood and gazed on the rippling rivulet beside him.

"Shall *I* tell you?" said a low, sweet voice; and Lucy Lendrick slipped her arm within his as she spoke—"shall I tell you, Doctor?"

"Do, by all means."

"A little of both, I opine. Mind," said she, laughing, "I have not the vaguest notion of what you were balancing in your mind, but somehow I suspect unmixed good or evil is very rare, and I take my stand on a compromise. Am I right?"

"I scarcely know, but I can't submit the case to you. I have an old-fashioned prejudice against letting young people judge their seniors. Let us talk of something else. What shall it be?"

"I want to talk to you of Tom."

"I have just been speaking to Haire about him. We must get him back here, Lucy—we really must."

"Do you mean here, in this house, Doctor?"

"Here, in this house. Come, don't shake your head, Lucy. I see the necessity for it on grounds you know nothing of. Lady Lendrick is surrounding your grandfather with her family, and I want Tom back here just that the Chief should see what a thorough Lendrick he is. If your grandfather only knew the stuff that's in him, he'd be prouder of him than of all his own successes."

"No, no, no,—a thousand times no, Doctor! It would never do—believe me, it would never do. There are things which a girl may submit to in quiet obedience, which in a man would require subservency. The Sewells, too, are to be here on Saturday, and who is to say what that may bring forth?"

"She wrote to you," said the Doctor, with a peculiar significance in his voice.

"Yes, a strange sort of note too, I almost wish I could show it to you,—I'd so like to hear what you'd say of the spirit of the writer."

"She told me she would write," said he again, with a more marked meaning in his manner.

"You shall see it," said she, resolutely; "here it is," and she drew forth the letter and handed it to him. For an instant she seemed as if about to speak, but suddenly, as if changing her mind, she merely murmured, "Read it, and tell me what you think of it."

The note ran thus:—

"MY DEAREST LUCY,—We are to meet to-morrow, and I hope and trust to meet like sisters who love each other. Let me make one brief explanation before that moment arrives. I cannot tell what rumours may have reached you of all that has happened here. I know nothing of what people say, nor have I the faintest idea how our life may have been

represented. If you knew me longer and better, you would know that I neither make this ignorance matter of complaint nor regret. I have lived about long enough to take the world at its just value, and not to make its judgments of such importance as can impair my self-esteem and my comfort. It would, however, have been agreeable to me to have known what you may have heard of me—of us—as it is not impossible I might have felt the necessity to add something—to correct something—perhaps to deny something. I am now in the dark, and pray forgive me if I stumble rudely against you, where I only meant to salute you courteously.

“You at least know the great disaster which befell here. Dr Beattie has told you the story—what more he may have said I cannot guess. If I were to wait for our meeting, I should not have to ask you. I should read it in your face, and hear it in every accent of your voice; but I write these few lines that you may know me at once in all frankness and openness, and know that if *you* be innocent of *my* secret, *I*, at least, have *yours* in my keeping. Yes, Lucy, I know all; and when I say all, I mean far more than you yourself know.

“If I were treacherous, I would not make this avowal to you. I should be satisfied with the advantages I possessed, and employ it to my benefit. Perhaps with any other woman than yourself I should

play this part,—with you I neither can nor will. I will declare to you frankly and at once, you have lost the game and I have won it. That I say this thus briefly, is because in amplifying I should seem to be attempting to explain what there is no explaining. That I say it in no triumph, my own conscious inferiority to you is the best guarantee. I never would have dreamed of a rivalry had I been a girl. It is because I cannot claim the prize I have won it. It is because my victory is my misery I have gained it. I think I know your nature well enough to know that you will bear me no ill-will. I even go so far as to believe I shall have your compassion and your sympathy. I need them more, far more, than you know of. I could tell you that had matters fallen out differently it would not have been to *your* advantage, for there were obstacles—family obstacles—perfectly insurmountable. This is no pretence: on my honour I pledge to the truth of what I say. So long as I believed they might be overcome, I was in *your* interest, Lucy. You will not believe me, will you, if I swear it? Will you if I declare it on my knees before you?

“If I have not waited till we met to say these things, it is that we may meet with open hearts, in sorrow, but in sincerity. When I have told you everything, you will see that I have not been to blame. There may be much to grieve over, but

there is nothing to reprehend—anywhere. And now, how is our future to be? it is for you to decide. I have not wronged you, and yet I am asking for forgiveness. Can you give me your love, and what I need as much, your pity? Can you forget your smaller affliction for the sake of my heavier one, for it is heavier?

“I plead guilty to one only treachery; and this I stooped to, to avoid the shame and disgrace of an open scandal. I told his mother that, though Lucy was my name, it was yours also; and that you were the Lucy of all his feverish wanderings. Your woman's heart will pardon me this one perfidy.

“She is a very dangerous woman in one sense. She has a certain position in the world, from which she could and would open a fire of slander on any one. She desires to injure me. She has already threatened, and she is capable of more than threatening. She says she will see Sir William. This she may not be able to do; but she can write to him. You know better than I do what might ensue from two such tempers meeting; for myself I cannot think of it.

“I have written you a long letter, dear Lucy, when I only meant to have written five or six lines. I have not courage to read it over; were I to do so, I am sure I would never send it. Perhaps you will not thank me for my candour. Perhaps you will

laugh at all my scrupulous honesty. Perhaps you will—no, that you never will—I mean, employ my trustfulness against myself.

“Who knows if I have not given to this incident an importance which you will only smile at? There are people so rich that they never are aware if they be robbed. Are you one of these, Lucy? and, if so, will you forgive the thief who signs herself your ever loving sister,

“LUCY SEWELL.

“I have told Dr Beattie I would write to you; he looked as if he knew that I might, or that I ought—which is it? Doctors see a great deal more than they ought to see. The great security against them is, that they acquire an indifference to the sight of suffering, which, in rendering them callous, destroys curiosity, and then all ills that can neither be bled nor blistered they treat as trifles, and end by ignoring altogether. Were it otherwise—that is, had they any touch of humanity in their nature—they would be charming confidants, for they know everything, and can go everywhere. If Beattie should be one of your pets, I ask pardon for this impertinence; but don't forget it altogether, as, one day or other, you will be certain to acknowledge its truth.

“We arrive by the 4.40 train on Saturday after-

noon. If I see you at the door when we drive up, I shall take it as a sign I am forgiven."

Beattie folded the letter slowly, and handed it to Lucy without a word. "Tell me," said he, after they had walked on several seconds in silence—"tell me, do you mean to be at the door as she arrives?"

"I think not," said she, in a very low voice.

"She has a humble estimate of doctors; but there is one touch of nature she must not deny them—they are very sensitive about contagion. Now, Lucy, I wish with all my heart that you were not to be the intimate associate of this woman."

"So do I, Doctor; but how is it to be helped?"

He walked along silent and in deep thought.

"Shall I tell you, Doctor, how it can be managed, but only by your help and assistance? I must leave this."

"Leave the Priory! but for where?"

"I shall go and nurse Tom: he needs *me*, Doctor, and I believe I need *him*; that is, I yearn after that old companionship which made all my life till I came here—— Come now, don't oppose this plan; it is only by your hearty aid it can ever be carried out. When you have told grandpapa that the thought is a good one, the battle will be more than half won. You see yourself I ought not to be here."

“Certainly not here with Mrs Sewell ; but there comes the grave difficulty of how you are to be lodged and cared for in that wild country where your brother lives?”

“My dear Doctor, I have never known pampering till I came here. Our life at home—and was it not happy!—was of the very simplest. To go back again to the same humble ways will be like a renewal of the happy past; and then Tom and I suit each other so well—our very caprices are kindred. Do say you like this notion, and tell me you will forward it.”

“The very journey is an immense difficulty.”

“Not a bit, Doctor; I have planned it all. From this to Marseilles is easy enough—only forty hours; once there, I either go direct to Cagliari, or catch the Sardinian steamer at Genoa——”

“You talk of these places as if they were all old acquaintances; but, my dear child, only fancy yourself alone in a foreign city. I don’t speak of the difficulties of a new language.”

“You might, though, my dear Doctor. My French and Italian, which carry me on pleasantly enough with Racine and Ariosto, will expose me sadly with my ‘commissionnaire.’”

“But quite alone you cannot go—that’s certain.”

“I must not take a maid, that’s as certain; Tom would only send us both back again. If you insist, and

if grandpapa insists upon it, I will take old Nicholas; he thinks it a great hardship that he has not been carried away over seas to see the great world: and all his whims and tempers that tortured us as children will only amuse us now; his very tyranny will be good fun."

"I declare frankly," said the Doctor, laughing, "I do not see how the difficulties of foreign travel are to be lessened by the presence of old Nicholas; but are you serious in all this?"

"Perfectly serious, and fully determined on it, if I be permitted."

"When would you go?"

"At once; I mean as soon as possible. The Sewells are to be here on Saturday. I would leave on Friday evening by the mail-train for London. I would telegraph to Tom to say on what day he might expect me."

"To-day is Tuesday; is it possible you could be ready?"

"I would start to-night, Doctor, if you only obtain my leave."

"It is all a matter of the merest chance how your grandfather will take it," said Beattie, musing.

"But *you* approve? tell me you approve of it."

"There is certainly much in the project that I like. I cannot bear to think of your living here with these Sewells; my experience of them is very brief, but it

has taught me to know there could be no worse companionship for you ; but as these are things that cannot be spoken of to the Chief, let us see by what arguments we should approach him. I will go at once. Haire is with him, and he is sure to see that what I suggest has come from you. If it should be the difficulty of the journey your grandfather objects to, Lucy, I will go as far as Marseilles with you myself, and see you safely embarked before I leave you." She took his hand and kissed it twice, but was not able to utter a word.

"There, now, my dear child, don't agitate yourself; you need all your calm and all your courage. Loiter about here till I come to you, and it shall not be long."

"What a true kind friend you are!" said she, as her eyes grew dim with tears. "I am more anxious about this than I like to own, perhaps. Will you, if you bring me good tidings, make me a signal with your handkerchief?"

He promised this, and left her.

Lucy sat down under a large elm-tree, resolving to wait there patiently for his return; but her fevered anxiety was such that she could not rest in one place, and was forced to rise and walk rapidly up and down. She imagined to herself the interview, and fancied she heard her grandfather's stern question—whether she were not satisfied with her home?

What could he do more for her comfort or happiness than he had done? Oh, if he were to accuse her of ingratitude, how should she bear it? Whatever irritability he might display towards others, to herself he had always been kind, and thoughtful, and courteous.

She really loved him, and liked his companionship, and she felt that if in leaving him she should consign him to solitude and loneliness, she could scarcely bring herself to go; but he was now to be surrounded with others, and if they were not altogether suited to him by taste or habit, they would, even for their own sakes, try to conform to his ways and likings.

Once more she bethought her of the discussion, and how it was faring. Had her grandfather suffered Beattie to state the case fully, and say all that he might in its favour? or had he, as was sometimes his wont, stopped him short with a peremptory command to desist? And then what part had Haire taken? Haire, for whose intelligence the old Judge entertained the lowest possible estimate, had somehow an immense influence over him, just as instincts are seen too strong for reason. Some traces of boyish intercourse yet survived and swayed his mind with his consciousness of its power.

"How long it seems," murmured she. "Does this delay augur ill for success, or is it that they are

talking over the details of the plan? Oh, if I could be sure of that! My poor dear Tom, how I long to be near you—to care for you—and watch you!” and as she said this, a cold sickness came over her, and she muttered aloud—“What perfidy it all is! as if I was not thinking of myself, and my own sorrows, while I try to believe I am but thinking of my brother.” And now her tears streamed fast down her cheeks, and her heart felt as if it would burst. “It must be an hour since he left this,” said she, looking towards the house, where all was still and motionless. “It is not possible that they are yet deliberating. Grandpapa is never long in coming to a decision. Surely all has been determined on before this, and why does he not come and relieve me from my miserable uncertainty?”

At last the hall door opened, and Haire appeared; he beckoned to her with his hand to come, and then re-entered the house. Lucy knew not what to think of this, and she could scarcely drag her steps along as she tried to hasten back. As she entered the hall, Haire met her, and, taking her hand cordially, said, “It is all right; only be calm, and don’t agitate him. Come in now,” and with this she found herself in the room where the old Judge was sitting, his eyes closed and his whole attitude betokening sleep. Beattie sat at his side and held one hand in his own. Lucy knelt down and pressed her lips to the other

hand, which hung over the arm of the chair. Gently drawing away the hand, the old man laid it on her head, and, in a low faint voice, said, "I must not look at you, Lucy, or I shall recall my pledge. You are going away!"

The young girl turned her tearful eyes towards him, and held her lips firmly closed to repress a sob, while her cheeks trembled with emotion.

"Beattie tells me you are right," continued he, with a sigh; and then, with a sort of aroused energy, he added, "But old age, amongst its other infirmities, fancies that right should yield to years. '*Ces sont les droits de la décrépitude*,' as La Rochefoucauld calls them. I will not insist upon my 'royalties,' Lucy, this time. You shall go to your brother." His hand trembled as it lay on her head, and then fell heavily to his side. Lucy clasped it eagerly, and pressed it to her cheek, and all was silent for some seconds in the room.

At last the old man spoke, and it was now in a clear distinct voice, though weak. "Beattie will tell you everything, Lucy; he has all my instructions. Let him now have yours. To-morrow we shall, both of us, be calmer, and can talk over all together. To-morrow will be Thursday?"

"Wednesday, grandpapa."

"Wednesday—all the better, my dear child, another day gained. I say, Beattie," cried he in a

louder tone, "I cannot have fallen into the pitiable condition the newspapers describe, or I could never have gained this victory over my selfishness. Come, sir, be frank enough to own, that where a man combats himself, he asserts his identity. Haire will go out and give that as his own," muttered he; and as he smiled, he lay back, his breathing grew heavier and longer, and he sank into a quiet sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SOME CONJUGAL COURTESIES.

“ You have not told me what she wrote to you,” said Sewell to his wife, as he smoked his cigar at one side of the fire, while she read a novel at the other. It was to be their last evening at the Nest; on the morrow they were to leave it for the Priory. “ Were there any secrets in it, or were there allusions that I ought not to see ? ”

“ Not that I remember,” said she, carelessly.

“ What about our coming ? Does the old man seem to wish for it ?—how does she herself take it ? ”

“ She says nothing on the subject, beyond her regret at not being there to meet us.”

“ And why can't she ? where will she be ? ”

“ At sea, probably, by that time. She goes off to Sardinia to her brother.”

“ What ! do you mean to that fellow who is living with Fossbrooke ? Why didn't you tell me this before ? ”

“ I don’t think I remembered it ; or, if I did, it’s possible I thought it could not have much interest for you.”

“ Indeed, madam ! do you imagine that the only things I care for are the movements of *your* admirers ? Where’s this letter ? I’d like to see it.”

“ I tore it up. She begged me to do so when I had read it.”

“ How honourable ! I declare you ladies conduct your intercourse with an integrity that would be positively charming to think of, if only your male friends were admitted to any share of the fair dealing. Tell me so much as you can remember of this letter.”

“ She spoke of her brother having had a fever, and being now better, but so weak and reduced as to require great care and attention, and obliged to remove for change of air to a small island off the coast.”

“ And Fossbrooke—does she mention *him* ?”

“ Only that he is not with her brother, except occasionally: his business detains him near Cagliari.”

“ I hope it may continue to detain him there ! Has this young woman gone off all alone on this journey ?”

“ She has taken no maid. She said it might prove inconvenient to her brother ; and has only an old family servant she calls Nicholas with her.”

“ So, then, we have the house to ourselves, so far.

She'll not be in a hurry back, I take it. Anything would be better than the life she led with her grandfather."

"She seems sorry to part with him, and recurs three or four times to his kindness and affection."

"His kindness and affection! His vanity and self-love are nearer the mark. I thought I had seen something of conceit and affectation, but that old fellow leaves everything in that line miles behind. He is, without exception, the greatest bore and the most insupportable bully I ever encountered."

"Lucy liked him."

"She did not—she could not. It suits you women to say these things, because you cultivate hypocrisy so carefully that you carry on the game with each other! How could any one, let her be ever so abject, like that incessant homage this old man exacted—to be obliged to be alive to his vapid jokes and his dreary stories—to his twaddling reminiscences of college success, or House of Commons—Irish House too—triumphs? Do you think if I wasn't a beggar I'd go and submit myself to such a discipline?"

To this she made no reply, and for a while there was a silence in the room. At last he said, "*You'll* have to take up that line of character that *she* acted. *You'll* have to 'swing the incense' now. I'll be shot if *I* do."

She gave no answer, and he went on—"You'll

have to train the brats too to salute him, and kiss his hand, and call him—what are they to call him—grandpapa? Yes, they must say grandpapa. How I wish I had not sent in my papers! If I had only imagined I could have planted you all here, I could have gone back to my regiment and served out my time.”

“It might have been better,” said she, in a low voice.

“Of course it would have been better; each of us would have been free, and there are few people, be it said, take more out of their freedom—eh, madam?”

She shrugged her shoulders carelessly, but a slight, a very slight, flush coloured her cheek.

“By the way, now we’re on that subject, have you answered Lady Trafford’s letter?”

“Yes,” said she; and now her cheek grew crimson.

“And what answer did you send?”

“I sent back everything.”

“What do you mean?—your rings and trinkets—the bracelet with the hair—mine, of course—it could be no one’s but mine.”

“All, everything,” said she, with a gulp.

“I must read the old woman’s letter over again. You haven’t burnt *that*, I hope?”

“No; it’s up-stairs in my writing-desk.”

“I declare,” said he, rising and standing with his back to the fire, “you women, and especially fine ladies, say things to each other that men never would

dare to utter to other men. That old dame, for instance, charged you with what we male creatures have no equivalent for—cheating at play would be mild in comparison.”

“ I don’t think that *you* escaped scot-free,” said she, with an intense bitterness, though her tone was studiously subdued and low.

“ No,” said he, with a jeering laugh. “ I figured as the accessory or accomplice, or whatever the law calls it. I was what polite French ladies call *le mari complaisant*—a part I am so perfect in, madam, that I almost think I ought to play it for ‘ my Benefit.’ What do you say ? ”

“ Oh, sir, it is not for me to pass an opinion on your abilities.”

“ I have less bashfulness,” said he, fiercely. “ I’ll venture to say a word on *yours*. I’ve told you scores of times—I told you in India, I told you at the Cape, I told you when we were quarantined at Trieste, and I tell you now—that you never really captivated any man much under seventy. When they are tottering on to the grave, bald, blear-eyed, and deaf, you are perfectly irresistible ; and I wish—really I say it in all good faith—you would limit the sphere of your fascinations to such very frail humanities. Trafford only became spoony after that smash on the skull ; as he grew better, he threw off his delusions—didn’t he ? ”

"So he told me," said she, with perfect calm.

"By Jove! that was a great fluke of mine," cried he aloud. "That was a hazard I never so much as tried. So that this fellow had made some sort of a declaration to you?"

"I never said so."

"What was it then that you *did* say, madam? let us understand each other clearly."

"Oh, I am sure we need no explanations for that," said she, rising, and moving towards the door.

"I want to hear about this before you go," said he, standing between her and the door.

"You are not going to pretend jealousy, are you?" said she, with an easy laugh.

"I should think not," said he, insolently. "That is about one of the last cares will ever rob me of my rest at night. I'd like to know, however, what pretext I have to send a ball through your young friend."

"Oh, as to that peril, it will not rob *me* of a night's rest!" said she, with such a look of scorn and contempt as seemed actually to sicken him, for he staggered back as though about to fall, and she passed out ere he could recover himself.

"It is to be no quarter between us then! Well, be it so," cried he, as he sank heavily into a seat. "She's playing a bold game when she goes thus far." He leaned his head on the table, and sat thus so long that he appeared to have fallen asleep; indeed, the

servant who came to tell him that tea was served feared to disturb him, and retired without speaking. Far from sleeping, however, his head was racked with a maddening pain, and he kept on muttering to himself, "This is the second time—the second time she has taunted me with cowardice. Let her beware! Is there no one will warn her against what she is doing?"

"Missis says, please, sir, won't you have a cup of tea?" said the maid timidly at the door.

"No; I'll not take any."

"Missis says too, sir, that Miss Blanche is tuk poorly, and has a shiverin' over her, and a bad headache, and she hopes you'll send in for Dr Tobin."

"Is she in bed?"

"Yes, sir, please."

"I'll go up and see her;" and with this he arose and passed up the little stair that led to the nursery. In one bed a little dark-haired girl of about three years old lay fast asleep; in the adjoining bed a bright blue-eyed child of two years or less lay wide awake, her cheeks crimson, and the expression of her features anxious and excited. Her mother was bathing her temples with cold water as Sewell entered, and was talking in a voice of kind and gentle meaning to the child.

"That stupid woman of yours said it was Blanche," said Sewell, pettishly, as he gazed at the little girl.

"I told her it was Cary; she has been heavy all day, and eaten nothing. No, pet—no, darling," said she, stooping over the sick child, "pa is not angry, he is only sorry that little Cary is ill."

"I suppose you'd better have Tobin to see her," said he, coldly. "I'll tell George to take the tax-cart and fetch him out. It's well it wasn't Blanche," muttered he, as he sauntered out of the room. His wife's eyes followed him as he went, and never did a human face exhibit a stronger show of repressed passion than hers, as, with closely-compressed lips and staring eyes, she watched him as he passed out.

"The fool frightened me—she said it was Blanche," were the words he continued to mutter as he went down the stairs.

Tobin arrived in due time, and pronounced the case not serious—a mere feverish attack that only required a day or two of care and treatment.

"Have you seen Colonel Sewell?" said Mrs Sewell, as she accompanied the doctor down-stairs.

"Yes; I told him just what I've said to you."

"And what reply did he make?"

"He said, 'All right! I have business in town, and must start to-morrow. My wife and the chicks can follow by the end of the week.'"

"It's so like him!—so like him!" said she, as though the pent-up passion could no longer be restrained.

CHAPTER XL.

MR BALFOUR'S OFFICE.

ON arriving in Dublin, Sewell repaired at once to Balfour's office in the Castle-yard; he wanted to "hear the news," and it was here that every one went who wanted to "hear the news." There are in all cities, but more especially in cities of the second order, certain haunts where the men about town repair; where, like the changing-houses of bankers, people exchange their "credits"—take up their own notes, and give up those of their neighbours.

Sewell arrived before the usual time when people dropped in, and found Balfour alone and at breakfast. The Under-Secretary's manner was dry, so much Sewell saw as he entered; he met him as though he had seen him the day before, and this, when men have not seen each other for some time, has a certain significance. Nor did he ask when he had come up, nor in any way recognise that his appearance was matter of surprise or pleasure.

"Well, what's going on here?" said Sewell, as he flung himself into an easy-chair, and turned towards the fire. "Anything new?"

"Nothing particular. I don't suppose you care for the Cattle Show, or the Royal Irish Academy?"

"Not much—at least I can postpone my inquiries about them. How about my place here? are you going to give me trouble about it?"

"Your place—your place?" muttered the other once or twice; and then, standing up with his back to the fire, and his skirts over his arms, he went on. "Do you want to hear the truth about this affair? or are we only to go on sparring with the gloves—eh?"

"The truth, of course, if such a novel proceeding should not be too much of a shock to you."

"No, I suspect not. I do a little of everything every day just to keep my hand in."

"Well, go on now—out with this truth."

"Well, the truth is—I am now speaking confidentially—if I were you I'd not press my claim to that appointment—do you perceive?"

"I do not; but perhaps I may when you have explained yourself a little more fully."

"And," continued he, in the same tone, and as though no interruption had occurred, "that's the opinion of Halkett, and Doyle, and Jocelyn, and the rest."

"Confidentially, of course," said Sewell, with a sneer so slight as not to be detected.

"I may say confidentially, because it was at dinner we talked it over, and we were only the household—no guests but Byam Herries and Barrington."

"And you all agreed?"

"Yes, there was not a dissentient voice but Jocelyn's, who said, if he were in your place, he'd insist on having all the papers and letters given up to him. His view is this. 'What security have I that the same charges are not to be renewed again and again? I submit now, but am I always to submit? Are my Indian'—(what shall I call them? I forget what he called them; I believe it was escapades)—'my Indian escapades to declare me unfit to hold anything under the Crown?' He said a good deal in that strain, but we did not see it. It was hard, to be sure, but we did not see it. As Halkett said, 'Sewell has had his innings already in India. If, with a pretty wife and a neat turn for billiards, he did not lay by enough to make his declining years comfortable, I must say that he was not provident.' Doyle, however, remarked that after that affair with Loftus up at Agra—wasn't it Agra?"—Sewell nodded—"it wasn't so easy for you to get along as many might think, and that you were a devilish clever fellow to do what you had done. Doyle likes you, I think." Sewell nodded again, and, after a slight pause, Balfour proceeded—"And it was

Doyle, too, said, 'Why not try for something in the colonies? There are lots of places a man can go and nothing be ever heard of him. If I was Sewell, I'd say, Make me a barrackmaster in the Sandwich Islands, or a consul in the Caraccas.'

"They all concurred in one thing, that you never did so weak a thing in your whole life as to have any dealings with Trafford. It was his mother went to the Duke—ay, into the private office at the Horse Guards—and got Clifford's appointment cancelled, just for a miserable five hundred pounds Jack won off the elder brother,—that fellow who died last year at Madeira. She's the most dangerous woman in Europe. She does not care what she says, nor to whom she says it. She'd go up to the Queen at a drawing-room and make a complaint as soon as she'd speak to you or me. As it is, she told their Excellencies here all that went on in your house, and I suppose scores of things that did not go on either, and said, 'And are you going to permit this man to be'—she did not remember what, but she said—'a high official under the Crown? and are you going to receive his wife amongst your intimates?' What a woman she is! To hear her you'd think her 'dear child,' instead of being a strapping fellow of six feet two, was a brat in knickerbockers, with a hat and feather. The fellow himself must be a consummate muff to be bullied by her; but then the estate is not

entailed, they say, and there's a younger brother may come into it all. His chances look well just now, for Lionel has got a relapse, and the doctors think very ill of him."

"I had not heard that," said Sewell, calmly.

"Oh, he was getting on most favourably—was able to sit up at the window, and move a little about the room—when, one morning Lady Trafford had driven over to the Lodge to luncheon, he stepped down-stairs, in his dressing-gown as he was, got into a cab, and drove off into the country. All the cabman could tell was that he ordered him to take the road to Rathfarnham, and said, 'I'll tell you by-and-by where to;' and at last he said, 'Where does Sir William Lendrick live?' and though the man knew the Priory, he had taken a wrong turn and got down to ask the road. Just at this moment a carriage drove by with two greys and a postilion. A young lady was inside with an elderly gentleman, and the moment Trafford saw her he cried out, 'There she is—that is she!' As hard as they could they hastened after; but they smashed a trace, and lost several minutes in repairing it, and as many more in finding out which way the carriage had taken. It was to Kingstown, and, as the cabman suspected, to catch the packet for Holyhead; for just as they drove up, the steamer edged away from the pier, and the carriage with the greys drove off with only the old man

Trafford fell back in a faint, and appeared to have continued so, for when they took him out of the cab at Bilton's he was insensible.

"Beattie says he'll come through it, but Maclin thinks he'll never be the same man again; he'll have a hardening or a softening—which is it?—of the brain, and that he'll be fit for nothing."

"Except a place in the viceregal household, perhaps. I don't imagine you want gold-medallists for your gentlemen-in-waiting?"

"We have some monstrous clever fellows, let me tell you. Halkett made a famous examination at Sandhurst, and Jocelyn wrote that article in *Bell's Life*, 'The Badger Drawn at last.'"

"To come back to where we were, how are you to square matters with the Chief Baron? Are you going to law with him about this appointment, or are you about to say that *I* am the objection? Let me have a definite answer to this question."

"We have not fully decided; we think of doing either; and we sometimes incline to do both. At all events, you are not to have it; that's the only thing certain."

"Have you got a cigar? No, not these things; I mean something that can be smoked?"

"Try this," said Balfour, offering his case.

"They're the same as those on the chimney. I must say, Balfour, the traditional hospitalities of the

Castle are suffering in their present hands. When I dined here the last time I was in town, they gave me two glasses of bad sherry and one glass of a corked Gladstone ; and I came to dinner that day after reading in Barrington all about the glorious festivities of the Irish Court in the olden days of Richmond and Bedford."

"Lady Trafford insists that your names—your wife's as well as your own—are to be scratched from the dinner-list. Sir Hugh has three votes in the House, and she bullies us to some purpose, I can tell you. I can't think how you could have made this woman so much your enemy. It is not dislike—it is hatred."

"Bad luck, I suppose," said Sewell, carelessly.

"She seems so inveterate, too ; she'll not give you up very probably."

"Women generally don't weary in this sort of pursuit."

"Couldn't you come to some kind of terms ? Couldn't you contrive to let her know that you have no designs on her boy ? You've won money of him, haven't you ?"

"I have some bills of his—not for a very large amount, though ; you shall have them a bargain."

"I seldom speculate," was the dry rejoinder.

"You are right ; nor is this the case to tempt you."

"They'll be paid, I take it?"

"Paid! I'll swear they shall!" said Sewell, fiercely. "I'll stand a deal of humbug about dinner invitations, and cold salutations, and suchlike; but none, sir, not one, about what touches a material interest."

"It's not worth being angry about," said Balfour, who was really glad to see the other's imperturbability give way.

"I'm not angry. I was only a little impatient, as a man may be when he hears a fellow utter a truism as a measure of encouragement. Tell your friends—I suppose I must call them your friends—that they make an egregious mistake when they push a man like me to the wall. It is intelligible enough in a woman to do it; women don't measure their malignity, nor their means of gratifying it; but *men* ought to know better."

"I incline to think I'll tell my 'friends' nothing whatever on the subject."

"That's as you please; but remember this—if the day should come that I need any of these details you have given me this morning, I'll quote them, and you too, as their author; and if I bring an old house about your ears, look out sharp for a falling chimney-pot! You gave me a piece of advice a while ago," continued he, as he put on his hat before the glass, and arranged his necktie. "Let me repay

you with two, which you will find useful in their several ways: Don't show your hand when you play with as shrewd men as myself; and, Don't offer a friend such execrable tobacco as that on the chimney;" and with this he nodded and strolled out, humming an air as he crossed the Castle-yard and entered the city.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE PRIORY IN ITS DESERTION.

THE old Judge was very sad after Lucy's departure from the Priory. While she lived there they had not seen much of each other, it is true. They met at meal times, and now and then Sir William would send up the housekeeper to announce a visit from him; but there is a sense of companionship in the consciousness that under the same roof with you dwells one upon whose affection you can draw—whose sympathy will be with you in your hour of need; and this the old man now felt to be wanting; and he wandered restlessly about the house and the garden, tenacious to see that nothing she liked or loved was threatened with any change, and repeating to all that she must find everything as she left it when she came back again.

Sewell had been recalled to the country by the illness of his child, and they were not expected at the Priory for at least a week or two longer. Haire

had gone on circuit, and even Beattie the Judge only saw hurriedly and at long intervals. With Lady Lendrick he had just had a most angry correspondence, ending in one of those estrangements which, had they been nations instead of individuals, would have been marked by the recall of their several envoys, but which they were satisfied to signalise by an order at the Priory gate-lodge not to admit her ladyship's carriage, and an equally determined command at Merrion Square for the porter to take in no letters that came from the Chief Baron.

Lest the world should connect this breach with any interest in my story, I may as well declare at once the incident had no possible bearing upon it. It was a little episode entirely self-contained, and consisted in Lady Lendrick having taken advantage of Sir William's illness and confinement to house to send for and use his carriage-horses—a liberty which he resented by a most furious letter, to which the rejoinder begat another infinitely more sarcastic—the correspondence ending by a printed notice which her ladyship received in an envelope, that the Chief Baron's horses would be sold on the ensuing Saturday at Dycer's to the highest bidder, his lordship having no further use for them.

Let me own that the old Judge was sincerely sorry when this incident was concluded. So long

as the contest lasted, while he was penning his epistle or waiting for the reply, his excitement rallied and sustained him. He used to sit after the despatch of one of his cutting letters calculating with himself the terror and consternation it produced, just as the captain of a frigate might have waited with eager expectancy that the smoke might drift away and show him the shattered spars or the yawning bulwarks of his enemy. But when his last missive was returned unopened, and the messenger reported that the doctor's carriage was at her ladyship's door as he came away, the Judge collapsed at once, and all the dreariness of his deserted condition closed in upon him.

Till Sewell returned to town, Sir William resolved not to proceed farther with respect to the registrarship. His plan, long determined upon, was to induct him into the office, administer the oaths, and leave him to the discharge of the duties. The scandal of displacing an official would, he deemed, be too great a hazard for any Government to risk. At all events, if such a conflict came, it would be a great battle, and with the nation for spectators.

"The country shall ring with it," was the phrase he kept repeating over and over as he strolled through his neglected garden or his leafy shrubberies; but as he plodded along, alone and in silence, the dreary conviction would sometimes shoot across

his mind that he had run his race, and that the world had wellnigh forgotten him. "In a few days more," sighed he out, "it will be over, and I shall be chronicled as the last of them." And for a moment it would rally him to recall the glorious names with which he claimed companionship, and compare them—with what disparagement!—with the celebrities of the time.

It was strange how bright the lamp of intellect would shine out as the wick was fast sinking in the socket. His memory would revive some stormy scene in the House, some violent altercation at the Bar, and all the fiery eloquence of passion would recur to him, stirring his heart and warming his blood, till he half-forgot his years, and stood forth, with head erect and swelling chest, strong with a sense of power and a whole soulful of ambition.

"Beattie would not let me take my Circuit," would he say. "I wish he saw me to-day. Decaying powers! I would tell them that the Coliseum is grander in its ruin than all their stuccoed plastering in its trim propriety. Had he suffered me to go, the grand jury would have heard a charge such as men's ears have not listened to since Avonmore! Avonmore! what am I saying?—Yelverton had not half my law, nor a tenth part of my eloquence."

In his self-exaltation he began to investigate whether he was greater as an advocate or as prose-

cutor. How difficult to decide! After all, it was in the balance of the powers thus displayed that he was great as a judge. He recalled the opinions of the press when he was raised to the bench, and triumphantly asked aloud, had he not justified every hope and contradicted every fear that was entertained of him? "Has my learning made me intolerant or my brilliancy led me into impatience? Has the sense of superiority that I possess rendered me less conciliatory? Has my "impetuous genius"—how fond they were of that phrase!—carried me away into boundless indiscretions? and have I, as one critic said, so concentrated the attention of the jury on myself that the evidence went for nothing and the charge was everything?"

It was strange how these bursts of inordinate vanity and self-esteem appeared to rally and invigorate the old man—redressing, as it were, the balance of the world's injustice—such he felt it—towards him. They were like a miser's hoard, to be counted and recounted in secret with that abiding assurance that he had wealth and riches, however others might deem him poor.

It was out of these promptings of self-love that he drew the energetic powers that sustained him, broken and failing and old as he was.

Carried on by his excited thoughts, he strayed away to a little mound, on which, under a large

weeping ash, a small bench was placed, from which a wide view extended over the surrounding country. There was a tradition of a summer-house on the spot in Curran's day, and it was referred to more than once in the diaries and letters of his friends, and the old Chief loved the place, as sacred to great memories.

He had just toiled up the ascent, and gained the top, when a servant came to present him with a card and a letter, saying that the gentleman who gave them was then at the house. The card bore the name—"Captain Trafford, —th Regiment." The letter was of a few lines, and ran thus:—

"MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM, —I had promised my friend and late patient Captain Trafford to take him over to the Priory this morning and present him to you. A sudden call has, however, frustrated the arrangement; and as his time is very brief, I have given him this as a credential to your acquaintance, and I hope you will permit him to stroll through the garden and the shrubberies, which he will accept as a great favour. I especially beg that you will lay no burthen on your own strength to become his entertainer: he will be amply gratified by a sight of your belongings, of which he desires to carry the memory beyond seas.—Believe me very sincerely yours,

"J. BEATTIE."

"If the gentleman who brought this will do me the favour to come up here, say I shall be happy to see him."

As the servant went on his message the old man lay back on his seat, and, closing his eyes, muttered some few dropping words, implying his satisfaction at this act of reverential homage. "A young soldier too; it speaks well for the service when the men of action revere the men of thought. I am glad it is a good day with me; he shall carry away other memories than of woods and streams. Ah! here he comes."

Slowly, and somewhat feebly, Trafford ascended the hill, and with a most respectful greeting approached the Judge.

"I thank you for your courtesy in coming here, sir," said the Chief, "and when we have rested a little I will be your *Cicerone* back to the house." The conversation flowed on pleasantly between them, Sir William asking where Trafford had served, and what length of time he had been in Ireland—his inquiries evidently indicating that he had not heard of him before, or if he had, had forgotten him.

"And now you are going to Malta?"

"Yes, my lord; we sail on the 12th."

"Well, sir, Valetta has no view to rival that. See what a noble sweep the bay takes here, and mark how well the bold headlands define the limits! Look

at that stretch of yellow beach, like a golden fillet round the sea; and then mark the rich woods waving in leafy luxuriance to the shore! Those massive shadows are to landscape what times of silent thought are to our moral natures. Do you like your service, sir?"

"Yes, my lord; there is much in it that I like. I would like it all if it were in 'activity.'"

"I have much of the soldier in myself, and the qualities by which I have gained any distinction I have won are such as make generals—quick decision, rapid intelligence, prompt action."

Trafford bowed to this pretentious summary, but did not speak.

The old Judge went on to describe what he called the military mind, reviewing in turn the generals of note from Hannibal down to Marlborough. "What have they left us by way of legacy, sir? The game, lost or won, teaches us as much! Is not a letter of Cicero, is not an ode of Horace, worth it all? And as for battle-fields, it is the painter, not the warrior, has made them celebrated. Wouvermans has done more for war than Turenne!"

"But, my lord, there must be a large number of men like myself who make very tolerable soldiers, but who would turn out sorry poets or poor advocates."

"Give me your arm now, and I will take you round by the fish-pond, and show you where the 'Monks of

the Screw' held their first meeting. You have heard of that convivial club?" Trafford bowed; and the Judge went on to tell of the strange doings of those grave and thoughtful men, who deemed no absurdity too great in their hours of distraction and levity. When they reached the house the old man was so fatigued that he had to sit down in the porch to rest. "You have seen all, sir; all I have of memorable. You say you'd like to see the garden, but there is not a memory connected with it. See it, however, by all means; saunter about till I have rallied a little, and then join me at my early dinner. I'll send to tell you when it is ready. I am sorry it will be such a lonely meal; but she who could have thrown sunshine over it is gone—gone!" And he held his hands over his face, and said no more. Trafford moved silently away, and went in search of the garden. He soon found the little wicket, and ere many minutes was deep in the leafy solitude of the neglected spot. At last he came upon the small gate in the laurel hedge, passing through which he entered the little flower-garden. Yes, yes; there was no doubting it! This was hers! Here were the flowers she tended; here the heavy bells from which she emptied the rain-drops; here the tendrils her own hands had trained! Oh, force of love, that makes the very ground holy, and gives to every leaf and bud an abiding value! He threw himself upon the sward

and kissed it. There was a little seat under a large ilex—how often had she sat there thinking!—could it be thinking over the days beside the Shannon—that delicious night they came back from Holy Island, the happiest of all his life? Oh, if he could but believe that she loved him! if he could only know that she did not think of him with anger and resentment!—for she might; who could tell what might have been said of his life at the Sewells'? He had made a confidant of one who assumed to misunderstand him, and who overwhelmed him with a confession of her own misery, and declared she loved him; and this while he lay in a burning fever, his head racked with pain, and his mind on the verge of wandering. Was there ever a harder fate than his? That he had forfeited the affection of his family, that he had wrecked his worldly fortunes, seemed little in his eyes to the danger of being thought ill of by her he loved.

His father's last letter to him had been a command to leave the army and return home, to live there as became the expectant head of the house. "I will have your word of honour to abandon this ignoble passion"—so he called his love; "and, in addition, your solemn pledge never to marry an Irishwoman." These words were, he well knew, supplied by his mother. It had been the incessant burthen of her harangues to him during the tedious days of his recovery; and even when, on the morning of this very

day, she had been suddenly recalled to England by a severe attack of illness of her husband, her last act before departure was to write a brief note to Lionel, declaring that if he should not follow her within a week, she would no longer conceive herself bound to maintain his interests against those of his more obedient and more affectionate brother.

"Won't that help my recovery, Doctor?" said he, showing the kind and generous epistle to Beattie. "Are not these the sort of tonic stimulants your art envies?"

Beattie shook his head in silence, and, after a long pause, said, "Well, what was your reply to this?"

"Can you doubt it? Don't you know it; or don't you know *me*?"

"Perhaps I guess."

"No, but you are certain of it, Doctor. The regiment is ordered to Malta, and sails on the 12th. I go with them! Holt is a grand old place, and the estate is a fine one; I wish my brother every luck with both. Will you do me a favour—a great favour?"

"If in my power, you may be certain I will. What is it?"

"Take me over to the Priory; I want to see it. You can find some pretext to present me to the Chief Baron, and obtain his leave to wander through the grounds."

"I perceive—I apprehend," said Beattie, slyly. "There is no difficulty in this. The old Judge cherishes the belief that the spot is little short of sacred; he only wonders why men do not come as pilgrims to visit it. There is a tradition of Addison having lived there, while Secretary in Ireland; Curran certainly did; and a greater than either now illustrates the locality."

It was thus that Trafford came to be there; with what veneration for the haunts of genius let the reader picture to himself!

"His lordship is waiting dinner, sir," said a servant, abruptly, as he sat there—thinking, thinking—and he arose and followed the man to the house.

The Chief Baron had spent the interval since they parted in preparing for the evening's display. To have for his guest a youth so imbued with reverence for Irish genius and ability, was no common event. Young Englishmen, and soldiers, too, were not usually of this stuff; and the occasion to make a favourable impression was not to be lost.

When he entered the dinner-room, Trafford was struck by seeing that the table was laid for three, though they were but two; and that on the napkin opposite to where he sat a small bouquet of fresh flowers was placed.

"My granddaughter's place, sir," said the old Judge,

as he caught his eye. "It is reserved for her return. May it be soon!"

How gentle the old man's voice sounded as he said this, and how kindly his eyes beamed! Trafford thought there was something actually attractive in his features, and wondered he had not remarked it before.

Perhaps on that day when the old Judge well knew how agreeable he was, what stores of wit and pleasantry he was pouring forth, his convictions assured him that his guest was charmed. It was a very pardonable delusion—he talked with great brilliancy and vigour. He possessed the gift—which would really seem to be the especial gift of Irishmen of that day—to be a perfect relater. To a story he imparted that slight dash of dramatic situation and dialogue that made it life-like; and yet never retarded the interest nor prolonged the catastrophe. Acute as was his wit, his taste was fully as conspicuous, never betraying him for an instant, so long as his personal vanity could be kept out of view.

Trafford's eager and animated attention showed with what pleasure he listened; and the Chief, like all men who love to talk, and know they talk well, talked all the better for the success vouchsafed to him. He even arrived at that stage of triumph in which he felt that his guest was no common man, and wondered if England really turned out many

young fellows of this stamp—so well read, so just, so sensible, so keenly alive to nice distinction, and so unerring in matters of taste?

“You were schooled at Rugby, sir, you told me; and Rugby has reason to be proud if she can turn out such young men. I am only sorry Oxford should not have put the fine edge on so keen an intellect.”

Trafford blushed at a compliment he felt to be so unmerited, but the old man saw nothing of his confusion—he was once again amongst the great scenes and actors of his early memories.

“I hope you will spare me another day before you leave Ireland. Do you think you could give me Saturday?” said the Chief, as his guest arose to take leave.

“I am afraid not, my lord; we shall be on the march by that day.”

“Old men have no claim to use the future tense, or I should ask you to come and see me when you come back again.”

“Indeed will I. I cannot thank you enough for having asked me.”

“Why are there not more young men of that stamp?” said the old Judge, as he looked after him as he went. “Why are they not more generally cultivated and endowed as he is? It is long since I have found one more congenial to me in every

way. I must tell Beattie I like his friend. I regret not to see more of him."

It was in this strain Sir William ruminated and reflected; pretty much like many of us, who never think our critics so just or so appreciative as when they applaud ourselves.

CHAPTER XLII.

NECESSITIES OF STATE.

It is, as regards views of life and the world, a somewhat narrowing process to live amongst sympathisers, and it may be assumed as an axiom, that no people so much minister to a man's littleness as those who pity him.

Now, when Lady Lendrick separated from Sir William, she carried away with her a large following of sympathisers. The Chief Baron was well known; his haughty overbearing temper at the bar, his assuming attitude in public life, his turn for sarcasm and epigram, had all contributed to raise up for him a crowd of enemies; and these, if not individually well disposed to Lady Lendrick, could at least look compassionately on one whose conjugal fate had been so unfortunate. All *her* shortcomings were lost sight of in presence of *his* enormities, for the Chief Baron's temper was an Aaron's rod of irascibility, which devoured every other; and when the

verdict was once passed, that "no woman could live with him," very few women offered a word in his defence.

It is just possible, that if it had not been for this weight in the opposite scale, Lady Lendrick herself would not have stood so high. Sir William's faults, however, were accounted to her for righteousness, and she traded on a very pretty capital in consequence. Surrounded by a large circle of female friends, she lived in a round of those charitable dissipations by which some people amuse themselves; and just as dull children learn their English history through a game, and acquire their geography through a puzzle, these grown-up children take in their Christianity by means of deaf and dumb bazaars, balls for blind institutions, and private theatricals for an orphan asylum. This Devotion made easy to the Lightest Disposition, is not, perhaps, a bad theory—at least it does not come amiss to an age which likes to attack its gravest ills in a playful spirit, to treat consumption with cough lozenges, and even moderate the excesses of insanity by soft music. There is another good feature too in the practice: it furnishes occupation and employment to a large floating class which, for the interests and comforts of society, it is far better should be engaged in some pursuit, than left free to the indulgence of censorious tastes and critical habits. Lady

Lendrick lived a sort of monarch amongst these. She was the patroness of this, the secretary of that, and the corresponding member of some other society. Never was an active intelligence more actively occupied ; but she liked it all, for she liked power, and, strange as it may seem, there is in a small way an exercise of power even in these petty administrations. Loud, bustling, overbearing, and meddlesome, she went everywhere, and did everything. The only sustaining hope of those she interfered with was, that she was too capricious to persist in any system of annoyance, and was prone to forget to-day the eternal truths she had propounded for reverence yesterday.

I am not sure that she conciliated—I am not sure that she would have cared for—much personal attachment ; but she had what certainly she did like, a large following of very devoted supporters. All her little social triumphs—and occasionally she had such—were blazoned abroad by those people who loved to dwell on the courtly attentions bestowed upon their favourite, what distinguished person had taken her “down” to dinner, and the neat compliment that the Viceroy paid her on the taste of her “tabinet.”

It need scarcely be remarked, that the backwater of all this admiration for Lady Lendrick was a swamping tide of ill-favour for her husband. It

would have been hard to deny him ability and talent. But what had he made of his ability and talent? The best lawyer of the bar was not even Chief-Justice of the Queen's Bench. The greatest speaker and scholar of his day was unknown, except in the reminiscences of a few men almost as old as himself. Was the fault in himself, or was the disqualifying element of his nature the fact of being an Irishman? For a number of years the former theory satisfied all the phenomena of the case, and the restless, impatient disposition—irritable, uncertain, and almost irresponsible—seemed reason enough to deter the various English officials who came over from either seeking the counsels or following the suggestions of the Bold Baron of the Exchequer. A change, however, had come, in part induced by certain disparaging articles of the English press, as to the comparative ability of the two countries; and now it became the fashion to say, that had Sir William been born on the sunnier side of St George's Channel, and had his triumphs been displayed at Westminster instead of the Four Courts, there would have been no limit to the praise of his ability as a lawyer, nor any delay in according him the highest honours the Crown could bestow.

Men shook their heads—recalled the memorable "curse" recorded by Swift, and said, "Of course there is no favour for an Irishman." It is not the

place nor the time to discuss this matter here. I would only say that a good deal of the misconception which prevails upon it is owing to the fact that the qualities which win all the suffrages of one country are held cheaply enough in the other. Plodding unadorned ability, even of a high order, meets little favour in Ireland, while on the other side of the Channel Irish quickness is accounted as levity, and the rapid appreciation of a question without the detail of long labour and thought, is set down as the lucky hit of a lively but very idle intelligence. I will not let myself wander away further in this digression, but come back to my story. Connected with this theory of Irish depreciation, was the position, that but for the land of his birth Sir William would have been elevated to the peerage.

Of course it was a subject to admit of various modes of telling, according to the tastes, the opportunities, and the prejudices of the tellers. The popular version of the story, however, was this: that Sir William declined to press a claim that could not have been resisted, on account of the peculiarly retiring, unambitious character of him who should be his immediate successor. His very profession—adopted and persisted in, in despite of his father's wish—was a palpable renunciation of all desire for hereditary honour. As the old Judge said, “The *Libro d'Oro* of nobility is not the Pharmacopœia;” and

the thought of a doctor in the peerage might have cost "Garter" a fit of apoplexy.

Sir William knew this well—no man better; but the very difficulties gave all the zest and all the flavour to the pursuit. He lived, too, in the hope that some Government official might have bethought him of this objection, that he might spring on him, tiger-like, and tear him in fragments.

"Let them but tell me this," muttered he, "and I will rip up the whole woof, thread by thread, and trace them! The noble Duke whose ancestor was a Dutch pedlar, the illustrious Marquess whose great-grandfather was a smuggler, will have to look to it. Before this cause be called on I would say to them, Better to retain me for the Crown! Ay, sirs, such is my advice to you."

While these thoughts agitated Sir William's mind, the matter of them was giving grave and deep pre-occupation to the Viceroy. The Cabinet had repeatedly pressed upon him the necessity of obtaining the Chief Baron's retirement from the bench—a measure the more imperative, that while they wanted to provide for an old adherent, they were equally anxious to replace him in the House by an abler and readier debater; for so is it, when dulness stops the way, dulness must be promoted; just as the most tumble-down old hackney-coach must pass on before my lord's carriage can draw up.

“Pemberton must go up,” said the Viceroy. “He made a horrid mess of that explanation t’other night in the House. His law was laughed at, and his logic was worse; he really must go on the bench. Can’t you hit upon something, Balfour? Can you devise nothing respecting the Chief Baron?”

“He’ll take nothing but what you won’t give him; I hear he insists on the peerage.”

“I’d give it, I declare—I’d give it to-morrow. As I told the Premier t’other day, Providence always takes care that these Law Lords have rarely successors. They are life peerages and no more; besides, what does it matter a man more or less in ‘the Lords’? The Peer without hereditary rank and fortune is like the officer who has been raised from the ranks—he does not dine at mess oftener than he can help it.”

Balfour applauded the illustration, and resolved to use it as his own.

“I say again,” continued his Excellency, “I’d give it, but they won’t agree with me; they are afraid of the English Bar—they dread what the benchers of Lincoln’s Inn would say.”

“They’d only say it for a week or two,” mumbled Balfour.

“So I remarked: you’ll have discontent, but it will be passing. Some newspaper letters will appear, but Themis and Aristides will soon tire, and if they

should not, the world who reads them will tire ; and probably the only man who will remember the event three months after will be the silversmith who is cresting the covered dishes of the new creation. You think you can't go and see him, Balfour ?”

“Impossible, my lord, after what occurred between us the last time.”

“I don't take it in that way. I suspect he'll not bear any malice. Lawyers are not thin-skinned people ; they give and take such hard knocks that they lose that nice sense of injury other folks are endowed with. I think you might go.”

“I'd rather not, my lord,” said he, shaking his head.

“Try his wife, then.”

“They don't live together. I don't know if they're on speaking terms.”

“So much the better—she'll know every chink of his armour, and perhaps tell us where he is vulnerable. Wait a moment. There has been some talk of a picnic on Dalkey Island. It was to be a mere household affair. What if you were to invite her?—making of course the explanation that it was a family party, that no cards had been sent out ; in fact, that it was to be so close a thing the world was never to hear of it.”

“I think the bait would be irresistible, particularly when she found out that all her own set and dear friends had been passed over.”

“Charge her to secrecy—of course she’ll not keep her word.”

“May I say we’ll come for her? the great mystery will be so perfectly in keeping with one of the household carriages and your Excellency’s liveries.”

“Won’t that be too strong, Balfour?” said the Viceroy, laughing.

“Nothing is too strong, my lord, in this country. They take their blunders neat as they do their sherry, and I’m sure that this part of the arrangement will, in the gossip it will give rise to, be about the best of the whole exploit.”

“Take your own way then; only make no such mistake as you made with the husband. No documents, Balfour—no documents, I beg;” and with this warning laughingly given, but by no means so pleasantly taken, his Excellency went off and left him.

CHAPTER XLIII.

MR BALFOUR'S MISSION.

LADY LENDRICK was dictating to her secretary Miss Morse, the Annual Report of the "Benevolent Ballad-singers' Aid Society," when her servant announced the arrival of Mr Cholmondely Balfour. She stopped abruptly short at a pathetic bit of description—"The aged minstrel, too old for erotic poetry, and yet debarred by the stern rules of a repressive policy from the strains of patriotic song,"—for, be it said parenthetically, Lady Lendrick affected "Irishry" to a large extent—and, dismissing Miss Morse to an adjoining room, she desired the servant to introduce Mr Balfour.

Is it fancy, or am I right in supposing that English officials have a manner especially assumed for Ireland and the Irish—a thing like the fur cloak a man wears in Russia, or the snow-shoes he puts on in Lapland, not intended for other latitudes, but admirably adapted for the locality it is made for?

I will not insist that this theory of mine is faultless, but I appeal to a candid public of my own countrymen if they have not in their experience seen what may support it. I do not say it is a bad manner—a presuming manner—a manner of depreciation towards those it is used to, or a manner indicative of indifference in him who uses it. I simply say that they who employ it keep it as especially for Ireland as they keep their Mackintosh capes for wet weather, and would no more think of displaying it in England than they would go to her Majesty's levee in a shooting-jacket. Mr Balfour was not wanting in this manner. Indeed, the Administration of which he formed a humble part were all proficient in it. It was a something between a mock homage and a very jocular familiarity, so that when he arose after a bow, deep and reverential enough for the presence of majesty, he lounged over to a chair and threw himself down with the ease and unconcern of one perfectly at home.

“And how is my lady? and how are the four-score and one associations for turnkeys' widows and dog-stealers' orphans doing? What's the last new thing in benevolence? Do tell me, for I've won five shillings at loo, and want to invest it.”

“You mean you have drawn your quarter's salary, Mr Balfour.”

"No, by Jove ; they don't pay us so liberally. We have the run of our teeth and no more."

"You forget your tongue, sir ; you are unjust."

"Why, my lady, you are quick as Sir William himself ; living with that great wit has made you positively dangerous."

"I have not enjoyed overmuch of the opportunity you speak of."

"Yes, I know that ; no fault of yours though. The world is agreed on that point. I take it he's about the most impossible man to live with the age has yet produced. Sewell has told me such things of him ! things that would be incredible if I had not seen him."

"I beg pardon for interrupting, but of course you have not come to dilate on the Chief Baron's defects of temper to his wife."

"No, only incidentally—parenthetically, as one may say—just as one knocks over a hare when he's out partridge-shooting."

"Never mind the hare then, sir ; keep to your partridges."

"My partridges ! my partridges ! which are my partridges ? Oh, to be sure ! I want to talk to you about Sewell. He has told you perhaps how ill we have behaved to him—grossly, shamefully ill, I call it."

"He has told me that the Government object to

his having this appointment, but he has not explained on what ground."

"Neither can I. Official life has its mysteries, and, hate them as one may, they must be respected ; he oughtn't to have sold out—it was rank folly to sell out. What could he have in the world better than a continued succession of young fellows fresh from home, and knowing positively nothing of horse-flesh or billiards ?"

"I don't understand you, sir—that is, I hope I misunderstand you," said she, haughtily.

"I mean simply this, that I'd rather be a lieutenant-colonel with such opportunities than I'd be Chairman of the Great Overland."

"Opportunities—and for what ?"

"For everything—for everything ; for game off the balls, on every race in the kingdom, and as snug a thing every night over a devilled kidney as any man could wish for. Don't look shocked—it's all on the square ; that old hag that was here last week would have given her diamond ear-rings to find out something against Sewell, and she couldn't."

"You mean Lady Trafford ?"

"I do. She stayed a week here just to blacken his character, and she never could get beyond that story of her son and Mrs Sewell."

"What story ? I never heard of it."

“A lie, of course, from beginning to end; and it’s hard to imagine that she herself believed it.”

“But what was it?”

“Oh, a trumpery tale of young Trafford having made love to Mrs Sewell, and proposed to run off with her, and Sewell having played a game at *écarté* on it, and lost—the whole thing being knocked up by Trafford’s fall. But you must have heard it! The town talked of nothing else for a fortnight.”

“The town never had the insolence to talk of it to *me*.”

“What a stupid town! If there be anything really that can be said to be established in the code of society, it is that you may say anything to anybody about their relations. But for such a rule, how could conversation go on?—who travels about with his friend’s family tree in his pocket? And as to Sewell—I suppose I may say it—he has not a truer friend in the world than myself.”

She bowed a very stiff acknowledgment of the speech, and he went on. “I’m not going to say he gets on well with his wife—but who does? Did you ever hear of him who did? The fact I take to be this, that every one has a certain capital of good-nature and kindness to trade on, and he who expends this abroad can’t have so much of it for home consumption; that’s how your insufferable husbands

are such charming fellows for the world ! Don't you agree with me ? ”

A very chilling smile, that might mean anything, was all her reply.

“ I was there all the time,” continued he, with unabated fluency. “ I saw everything that went on, Sewell's policy was what our people call non-intervention ; he saw nothing, heard nothing, believed nothing ; and I will say there's a great deal of dignity in that line ; and when your servant comes to wake you in the morning, with the tidings that your wife has run away, you have established a right before the world to be distracted, injured, overwhelmed, and outraged to any extent you may feel disposed to appear.”

“ Your thoughts upon morals are, I must say, very edifying, sir.”

“ They're always practical, so much I will say. This world is a composite sort of thing, with such currents of mixed motives running through it, if a man tries to be logical, he is sure to make an ass of himself, and one learns at last to become as flexible in his opinions and as elastic as the great British constitution.”

“ I am delighted with your liberality, sir, and charmed with your candour ; and as you have expressed your opinion so freely upon my husband and my son, would it appear too great a favour if I were to ask what you would say of myself ? ”

“That you are charming, Lady Lendrick—positively charming,” replied he, rapturously. “That there is not a grace of manner, nor a captivation, of which you are not mistress; that you possess that attraction which excels all others in its influence; you render all who come within the sphere of your fascination so much your slaves, that the cold grow enthusiastic, the distrustful become credulous, and even the cautious reserve of office gives way, and the well-trained private secretary of a Viceroy betrays himself into indiscretions that would half ruin an aide-de-camp.”

“I assure you, sir, I never so much as suspected my own powers.”

“True as I am here; the simple fact is, I have come to say so.”

“You have come to say so! What do you mean?”

With this he proceeded to explain that her Excellency had deputed him to invite Lady Lendrick to join the picnic on the island. “It was so completely a home party, that, except himself and a few of the household, none had even heard of it. None but those really intimate will be there,” said he; “and for once in our lives we shall be able to discuss our absent friends with that charming candour that gives conversation its salt. When we had written down all the names, it was her Excellency said, ‘I’d call this perfect if I could add one more to the list.’ ‘I’ll

swear I know whom you mean,' said his Excellency, and he took his pencil and wrote a line on a card. 'Am I right?' asked he. She nodded, and said, 'Balfour, go and ask her to come. Be sure you explain what the whole thing is, how it was got up, and that it must not be talked of.' Of course, do what one will, these things do get about. Servants will talk of them, and tradespeople talk of them, and we must expect a fair share of ill-nature and malice from that outer world which was not included in the civility; but it can't be helped. I believe it's one of the conditions of humanity, that to make one man happy you may always calculate on making ten others miserable."

This time Lady Lendrick had something else to think of besides Mr Balfour's ethics, and so she only smiled, and said nothing.

"I hope I'm to bring back a favourable answer," said he, rising to take leave. "Won't you let me say that we're to call for you?"

"I really am much flattered. I don't know how to express my grateful sense of their Excellencies' recollection of me. It is for Wednesday, you say?"

"Yes, Wednesday. We mean to leave town by two o'clock, and there will be a carriage here for you by that hour. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly."

"I am overjoyed at my success. Good-bye till

Wednesday, then." He moved towards the door, and then stopped. "What was it? I surely had something else to say. Oh, to be sure, I remember. Tell me, if you can, what are Sir William's views about retirement: he is not quite pleased with us just now, and we can't well approach him; but we really would wish to meet his wishes, if we could manage to come at them." All this he said in a sort of careless, easy way, as though it were a matter of little moment, or one calling for very slight exercise of skill to set right.

"And do you imagine he has taken me into his confidence, Mr Balfour?" asked she, with a smile.

"Not formally, perhaps—not what we call officially; but he may have done so in that more effective way termed 'officiously.'"

"Not even that. I could probably make as good a guess about your own future intentions as those of the Chief Baron."

"You have heard him talk of them?"

"Scores of times."

"And in what tone—with what drift?"

"Always as that of one very ill-used, hardly treated, undervalued, and the like."

"And the remedy? What was the remedy?"

"To make him a Peer—at least, so his friends say."

"But taking that to be impossible, what next?"

"He becomes 'impossible' also," said she, laughing.

"Are we to imagine that a man of such intelligence as he possesses cannot concede something to circumstances—cannot make allowances for the exigencies of 'party'—cannot, in fact, take any other view of a difficulty but the one that must respond to his own will?"

"Yes; I think that is exactly what you are called on to imagine. You are to persuade yourself to regard this earth as inhabited by the Chief Baron, and some other people not mentioned specifically in the census."

"He is most unreasonable, then."

"Of course he is; but I wouldn't have you tell him so. You see, Mr Balfour, the Chief imagines all this while that he is maintaining and upholding the privileges of the Irish Bar. The burden of his song is, There would have been no objection to my claim had I been the Chief Baron of the English Court."

"Possibly," murmured Balfour; and then, lower again, "Fleas are not——"

"Quite true," said she, for her quick ear caught his words—"quite true. Fleas are not lobsters—bless their souls! But, as I said before, I'd not remind them of that fact. 'The Fleas' are just sore enough upon it already."

Balfour for once felt some confusion. He saw

what a slip he had made, and how it had damaged his whole negotiation. Nothing but boldness would avail now, and he resolved to be bold.

“There is a thing has been done in England, and I don’t see why we might not attempt it in the present case. A great lawyer there obtained a peerage for his wife——”

She burst out into a fit of laughter at this, at once so hearty and so natural, that at last he could not help joining, and laughing too.

“I must say, Mr Balfour,” said she, as soon as she could speak—“I must say there is ingenuity in your suggestion. The relations that subsist between Sir William and myself are precisely such as to recommend your project.”

“I am not so sure that they are obstacles to it. I have always heard that he had a poor opinion of his son, who was a commonplace sort of man that studied medicine. It could be no part of the Chief Baron’s plan to make such a person the head of a house. Now, he likes Sewell, and he dotes on that boy—the little fellow I saw at the Priory. These are all elements in the scheme. Don’t you think so?”

“Let me ask you one question before I answer yours. Does this thought come from yourself alone, or has it any origin in another quarter?”

“Am I to be candid?”

"You are."

"And are *you* to be confidential?"

"Certainly."

"In that case," said he, drawing a long breath, as though about to remove a perilous weight off his mind, "I will tell you frankly, it comes from authority. Now, don't ask me more—not another question. I have already avowed what my instructions most imperatively forbid me to own—what, in fact, would be ruin to me if it were known that I revealed. What his Excellency—I mean, what the other person said was, 'Ascertain Lady Lendrick's wishes on this subject; learn, if you can—but, above all, without compromising yourself—whether she really cares for a step in rank; find out, if so, what aid she can or will lend us.' But what am I saying? Here am I entering upon the whole detail? What would become of me if I did not know I might rely upon you?"

"It's worth thinking over," said she, after a pause.

"I should think it is. It is not every day of our lives such a brilliant offer presents itself. All I ask, all I stipulate for, is that you make no confidences, ask no advice from any quarter. Think it well over in your own mind, but impart it to none, least of all to Sewell."

"Of course not to *him*," said she, resolutely, for

she knew well to what purposes he would apply the knowledge.

“Remember that we want to have the resignation before Parliament meets—bear that in mind. Time is all-important with us ; the rest will follow in due course.” With this he said Good-bye, and was gone.

“The rest will follow in due course,” said she to herself, repeating his last words as he went. “With your good leave, Mr Balfour, the ‘rest’ shall precede the beginning.”

Wasn't it Bolingbroke that said constitutional government never could go on without lying?—audacious lying, too. If the old Judge will only consent to go, her ladyship's peerage will admit of a compromise. Such was Mr Balfour's meditation as he stepped into his cab.

CHAPTER XLIV.

AFTER-DINNER THOUGHTS.

HER Majesty's —th had got their orders for Malta, and some surmised for India, though it was not yet known; but all agreed it was hard—"confoundedly hard," they called it. "Hadn't they had their turn of Indian service?—how many years had that grim old major passed in the Deccan—what weary winters had the bronzed bald captain there spent at Rangoon!"

How they inveighed against the national niggardliness that insisted on making a small army do the work of a large one. How they scouted the popular idea that regiments were treated alike, and without favouritism. *They* knew better. They knew that if they had been the Nine Hundred and Ninth or Three Thousand and First, there would have been no thought of sending them back to cholera and jungle fever. Some, with a little sly flattery, ascribed the order to their efficiency, and declared that they had done their work so well at Gonurshabad, the

Government selected them at once when fresh troubles were threatening ; and a few old grumblers, tired of service, sick of the Horse Guards—not over-enamoured of even life—agreed that it was rank folly to join a regiment where the lieutenant-colonel was not a man of high connections ; as they said, “If old Cave there had been a Lord George or even an Honourable, we’d have had ten years more of home service.”

With the exception of two or three raw subalterns who had never been out of England, and who wanted the glory of pig-sticking and the brevet to tell tiger stories, there were gloom and depression everywhere. The financially gifted complained that as they had all or nearly all bought their commissions, there was no comparison between the treatment administered to them and to officers in any foreign army ; and such as knew geography asked triumphantly whether a Frenchman, who could be only sent to Africa, or an Austrian, whose most remote banishment was the “Banat,” was in the same position as an unfortunate Briton, who could be despatched to patrol the North Pole to-day, and to-morrow relieve guard at New Zealand ? By a unanimous vote it was carried that the English army was the worst paid, hardest worked, and most ill-treated service in Europe ; but the roast-beef played just at the moment, and they went in to dinner.

As the last bars of that prandial melody were dying away, two men crossed the barrack-yard towards the mess-house. They were in close confabulation, and although evidently on their way to dinner, showed by their loitering pace how much more engrossed they were by the subject that engaged them than by any desire for the pleasures of the table. They were Colonel Cave and Sewell.

"I can scarcely picture to my mind as great a fool as that," said Sewell, angrily. "Can you?"

"I don't know," said Cave, slowly and doubtingly. "First of all, I never was heir to a large estate; and secondly, I was never, that I remember, in love."

"In love!—in fiddlestick. Why, he has not seen the girl this year and half; he scarcely knows her. I doubt greatly if she cares a straw for him; and for a caprice—a mere caprice—to surrender his right to a fine fortune and a good position is absolute idiocy; but I tell you more, Cave, though worse—far worse." Here his voice grew harsh and grating, as he continued, "When I and other men like me played with Trafford, we betted with the man who was to inherit Holt. When I asked the fellow to my house, and suffered a certain intimacy—for I never liked him—it was because he represented twelve thousand a-year in broad acres. I'd stand a good deal from a man like that, that I'd soon pull another up for—eh?"

The interrogative here puzzled Cave, who certainly was not a concurring party to the sentiment, and yet did not want to make it matter of discussion.

"We shall be late—we've lost our soup already," said he, moving more briskly forward.

"I'd no more have let that fellow take on him, as he did under my roof, than I'd suffer him to kennel his dogs in my dressing-room. You don't know—you can't know—how he behaved." These words were spoken in passionate warmth, and still there was that in the speaker's manner that showed a want of real earnestness; so it certainly seemed to Cave, who secretly determined to give no encouragement to further disclosures.

"There are things," resumed Sewell, "that a man can't speak on—at least he can only speak of them when they become the talk of the town."

"Come along, I want my dinner. I'm not sure I have not a guest besides, who does not know any of our fellows. I only remembered him this instant. Isn't this Saturday?"

"One thing I'll swear—he shall pay me every shilling he owes me, or he does not sail with the regiment. I'll stand no nonsense of renewals; if he has to sell out for it, he shall book up. You have told him, I hope, he has nothing to expect from my forbearance?"

"We can talk this all over another time. Come along now—we're very late."

"Go on, then, and eat your dinner; leave me to my cigar—I've no appetite. I'll drop in when you have dined."

"No, no; you shall come too—your absence will only make fellows talk; they are talking already."

"Are they? and in what way?" asked he, sternly.

"Nothing seriously, of course," mumbled Cave, for he saw how he had fallen into an indiscretion; "but you must come, and you must be yourself too. It's the only way to meet flying rumours."

"Come along, then," said Sewell, passing his arm within the other's, and they hurried forward without another word being spoken by either.

It was evident that Sewell's appearance caused some surprise. There was a certain awkward significance in the way men looked at him, and at each other, that implied astonishment at his presence.

"I didn't know you were down here," said the old Major, making an involuntary explanation of his look of wonderment.

"Nothing very remarkable, I take it, that a man is stopping at his own house," said Sewell, testily. "No—no fish. Get me some mutton," added he to the mess-waiter.

"You have heard that we've got our orders," said a captain opposite him.

"Yes; Cave told me."

"I rather like it—that is, if it means India," said a very young-looking ensign.

Sewell put up his eyeglass and looked at the speaker, and then, letting it drop, went on with his dinner without a word.

"There's no man can tell you more about Bengal than Colonel Sewell there," said Cave to some one near him. "He served on the Staff there, and knows every corner of it."

"I wish I didn't, with all my heart. It's a sort of knowledge that costs a man pretty dearly."

"I've always been told India was a capital place," said a gay, frank-looking young lieutenant, "and that if a man didn't drink, or take to high play, he could get on admirably."

"Nor entangle himself with a pretty woman," added another.

"Nor raise a smashing loan from the Agra Bank," cried a third.

"You are the very wisest young gentlemen it has ever been my privilege to sit down with," said Sewell, with a grin. "Whence could you have gleaned all these prudent maxims?"

"I got mine," said the lieutenant, "from a cousin. Such a good fellow as he was! he always tipped me when I was at Sandhurst, but he's past tipping any one now."

"Dead?"

"No; I believe it would be better he were; but he was ruined in India—'let in' on a race, and lost everything, even to his commission."

"Was his name Stanley?"

"No, Stapyleton—Frank Stapyleton—he was in the Greys."

"Sewell, what are you drinking?" cried Cave, with a loudness that overbore the talk around him. "I can't see you down there. You've got amongst the youngsters."

"I am in the midst of all that is agreeable and entertaining," said Sewell, with a smile of most malicious meaning. "Talk of youngsters indeed! I'd like to hear where you could match them for knowledge of life and mankind."

There was certainly nothing in his look or manner as he spoke these words that suggested distrust or suspicion to those around him, for they seemed overjoyed at his praise, and delighted to hear themselves called men of the world. The grim old Major at the opposite side of the table shook his head thoughtfully, and muttered some words to himself.

"They're a shady lot, I take it," said a young captain to his neighbour, "those fellows who remain in India, and never come home; either they have done something they can't meet in England, or they want to do things in India they couldn't do here."

"There's great truth in that remark," said Sewell.

“Captain Neeves, let us have a glass of wine together. I have myself seen a great deal to bear out your observation.”

Neeves coloured with pleasure at this approval, and went on. “I heard of one fellow—I forget his name—I never remember names; but he had a very pretty wife, and all the fellows used to make up to her, and pay her immense attention, and the husband rooked them all at *écarté*, every man of them.”

“What a scoundrel!” said Sewell, with energy. “You ought to have preserved the name, if only for a warning.”

“I think I can get it, Colonel. I’ll try and obtain it for you.”

“Was it Moorcroft?” cried one.

“Or Massingbred?” asked another.

“I’ll wager a sovereign it was Dudgeon; wasn’t it Dudgeon?”

But no; it was none of the three. Still the suggestions opened a whole chapter of biographical details, in which each of these worthies vied with the other. No man ever listened to the various anecdotes narrated with a more eager interest than Sewell. Now and then, indeed, a slight incredulity—a sort of puzzled astonishment that the world could be so very wicked—that there really were such fellows—would seem to distract him; but he listened on, and even occasionally asked an explanation of this or of that,

to show the extreme attention he vouchsafed to the theme.

To be sure, their attempts to describe the way some trick was played with the cards or the dice, how the horse was "nobbled" or the match "squared," were neither very remarkable for accuracy nor clearness. They had not been well "briefed," as lawyers say, or they had not mastered their instructions. Sewell, however, was no captious critic; he took what he got, and was thankful.

When they arose from the table, the old Major, dropping behind the line of those who lounged into the adjoining room, caught a young officer by the arm, and whispered some few words in his ear.

"What a scrape I'm in!" cried the young fellow, as he listened.

"I think not, this time; but let it be a caution to you how you talk of rumours in presence of men who are strangers to you."

"I say, Major," asked a young captain, coming up hurriedly, "isn't that Sewell the man of the Agra affair?"

"I don't think I'd ask him about it, that's all," said the Major, slyly, and moved away.

"I got amongst a capital lot of young fellows at my end of the table—second battalion men, I think—who were all new to me; but very agreeable," said Sewell to Cave, as he sipped his coffee.

"You'd like your rubber, Sewell, I know," said Cave; "let us see if we haven't got some good players."

"Not to-night—thanks—I promised my wife to be home early; one of the chicks is poorly."

"I want so much to have a game with Colonel Sewell," said a young fellow. "They told me up at Delhi that you hadn't your equal at whist or billiards."

Sewell's pale face grew flushed; but though he smiled and bowed, it was not difficult to see that his manner evinced more irritation than pleasure.

"I say," said another, who sat shuffling the cards by himself at a table, "who knows that trick about the double ace in picquet? That was the way Beresford was rooked at Madras."

"I must say good-night," said Sewell; it's a long drive to the Nest. You'll come over to breakfast some morning before you leave—won't you?"

"I'll do my best. At all events I'll pay my respects to Mrs Sewell;" and with a good deal of handshaking and some cordial speeches Sewell took his leave and retired.

Had any one marked the pace at which Sewell drove home that night, black and dark as it was, he would have said, "There goes one on some errand of life or death." There was something of recklessness in the way he pushed his strong-boned thoroughbred,

urging him up hill and down without check or relief, nor slackening rein till he drew up at his own door, the panting beast making the buggy tremble with the violent action of his respiration. Low muttering to himself, the groom led the beast to the stable, and Sewell passed up the stairs to the small drawing-room where his wife usually sat.

She was reading as he entered ; a little table with a tea equipage at her side. She did not raise her eyes from her book when he came in ; but whether his footstep on the stair had its meaning to her quick ears or not, a slight flush quivered on her cheek, and her mouth trembled faintly.

“ Shall I give you some tea ? ” asked she, as he threw himself into a seat. He made no answer, and she laid down her book, and sat still and silent.

“ Was your dinner pleasant ? ” said she, after a pause.

“ How could it be other than pleasant, madam,” said he, fiercely, “ when they talked so much of *you* ? ”

“ Of *me* ?—talked of *me* ? ”

“ Just so ; there were a set of young fellows who had just joined from another battalion, and who discoursed of you, of your life in India, of your voyage home, and lastly of some incidents that were attributed to your sojourn here. To me it was perfectly delightful. I had my opinion asked over and over again, if I

thought that such a levity was so perfectly harmless, and such another liberty was the soul of innocence? In a word, madam, I enjoyed the privilege, very rarely accorded to a husband I fancy, to sit in judgment over his own wife, and say what he thought of her conduct."

"Was there no one to tell these gentlemen to whom they were speaking?" said she, with a subdued quiet tone.

"No; I came in late and took my place amongst men all strangers to me. I assure you I profited largely by the incident. It is so seldom one gets public opinion in its undiluted form, it's quite refreshing to taste it neat. Of course they were not always correct. I could have set them right on many points. They had got a totally wrong version of what they called the 'Agra row,' though one of the party said he was Beresford's cousin."

She grasped the table convulsively to steady herself, and in so doing threw it down and the whole tea equipage with it.

"Yes," continued he, as though responding to this evidence of emotion on her part—"yes; it pushed one's patience pretty hard to be obliged to sit under such criticism."

"And what obliged you, sir? was it fear?"

"Yes, madam, you have guessed it. I was afraid—terribly afraid to own I was your husband."

A low faint groan was all she uttered, as she covered her face with her hands. "I had next," continued he, "to listen to a dispute as to whether Trafford had ever seriously offered to run away with you or not. It was almost put to the vote. Faith, I believe my casting voice might have carried the thing either way, if I had only known how to give it." She murmured something too low to be heard correctly, but he caught at part of it, and said, "Well, that was pretty much what I suspected. The debate was, however, adjourned; and as Cave called me by my name at the moment, the confidences came to an abrupt conclusion. As I foresaw that these youngsters, ignorant of life and manners as they were, would be at once for making apologetic speeches and suchlike, I stole away and came home, *more domestico*, to ruminate over my enjoyments at my own fireside."

"I trust, sir, they were strangers to your own delinquencies. I hope they had no unpleasant reminders to give you of yourself."

"Pardon, madam. They related several of what you pleasantly call my delinquencies, but they only came in as the by-play of the scene where you were the great character. We figured as brigands. It was *you* always who stunned the victim; *I* only rifled his pockets—fact, I assure you. I'm sorry that china is smashed. It was Saxe—wasn't it?"

She nodded.

"And a present of Trafford's, too! What a pity! I declare I believe we shall not have a single relic of the dear fellow, except it be a protested bill or two." He paused a moment or so, and then said, "Do you know, it just strikes me that if they saw how ill—how shamefully you played your cards in this Trafford affair, they'd actually absolve you of all the Circe gifts the world ascribes to you."

She fixed her eyes steadfastly on him, and as her clasped hands dropped on her knees, she leaned forward and said, "What do you mean by it? What do you want by this? If these men, whose insolent taunts you had not courage to arrest or to resent, say truly, whose the fault? Ay, sir, whose the fault? Answer me, if you dare, and say, was not my shame incurred to cover and conceal *yours*?"

"Your tragedy-queen airs have no effect upon *me*. I've been too long behind the scenes to be frightened by stage thunder. What is past is past. You married a gambler; and if you shared his good-luck, you oughtn't to grumble at partaking his bad fortune. If you had been tired of the yoke, I take it you'd have thrown it behind you many a day ago."

"If I have not done so, you know well why," said she, fiercely.

"The old story, I suppose—the dear darlings upstairs. Well, I can't discuss what I know nothing

about. I can only promise you that such ties would never bind *me*."

"I ask you once again what you mean by this?" cried she, as her lips trembled and her pale cheeks shook with agitation. "What does it point to? What am I to do? What am I to be?"

"That's the puzzle," said he, with an insolent levity; "and I'll be shot if I can solve it! Sometimes I think we'd do better to renounce the partnership, and try what we could do alone; and sometimes I suspect—it sounds odd, doesn't it?—but I suspect that we need each other."

She had by this time buried her face between her hands, and by the convulsive motion of her shoulders, showed she was weeping bitterly.

"One thing is certainly clear," said he, rising, and standing with his back to the fire—"if we decide to part company, we haven't the means. If either of us would desert the ship, there's no boat left to do it with."

She arose feebly from her chair, but sank down again, weak and overcome.

"Shall I give you my arm?" asked he.

"No; send Jane to me," said she, in a voice barely above a whisper.

He rang the bell, and said, "Tell Jane her mistress wants her;" and with this he searched for a book on the table, found it, and strolled off to his room, humming an air as he went.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE TIDELESS SHORES.

THEY who only know the shores of the Mediterranean in the winter months, and have but enjoyed the contrast—and what a contrast!—between our inky skies and rain-charged atmosphere with that glorious expanse of blue heaven and that air of exciting elasticity—they, I say, can still have no conception of the real ecstasy of life in a southern climate till they have experienced a summer beside the tideless sea.

Nothing is more striking in these regions than the completeness of the change from day to night. It is not alone the rapidity with which darkness succeeds—and in this our delicious twilight is ever to be regretted; what I speak of is the marvellous transition from the world of sights and sounds to the world of unbroken silence and dimness. In the day the whole air rings with life. The flowers flaunt out their gorgeous petals, not timidly or reluctantly,

but with the bold confidence of admitted beauty. The buds unfold beneath your very eyes, the rivulets sing in the clear air, and myriads of insects chirp till the atmosphere seems to be charged with vitality. This intense vitality is the striking characteristic of the scene; and it is to this that night succeeds, grand, solemn, and silent, at first to all seeming in unrelieved blackness, but soon to be displayed in a glorious expanse of darkest, deepest blue, with stars of surpassing size. To make this change more effective, too, it is instantaneous. It was but a moment back, and you were gazing on the mountain peaks bathed in an opal lustre, the cicada making the air vibrate with his song; a soft sea-breeze was blowing, and stirring the oranges amongst the leaves: and now all is dim and silent and breathless, as suddenly as though an enchanter's wand had waved and worked the miracle.

In a little bay—rather a cleft in the shore than a bay—bounded by rocks and backed by a steep mountain overgrown with stunted olives, stood a small cottage—so very small that it looked rather like a toy house than a human dwelling, a resemblance added to now as the windows lay wide open, and all the interior was a blaze of light from two lamps. All was still and silent within; no human being was to be seen, nor was there a sign of life about the place: for it was the only dwelling on the eastern

shore of the island, and that island was Maddalena, off Sardinia.

In a little nook among the rocks, close to the sea, sat Tom and Lucy Lendrick. They held hands, but were silent ; for they had come down into the darkness to muse and ponder, and drink in the delicious tranquillity of that calm hour. Lucy had now been above a week on the island, and every day Tom made progress towards recovery. She knew exactly, and as none other knew, what amount of care and nursing he would accept of without resistance—where companionship would gratify and where oppress him ; she knew, besides, when to leave him to the full swing of his own wild discursive talk, and never to break in upon his moods of silent reflection.

For upwards of half an hour they had sat thus without a word, when Tom, suddenly turning round, and looking towards the cottage, said, “ Isn’t this the very sort of thing we used to imagine and wish for long ago, Lucy ? ”

“ It was just what was passing through my mind. I was thinking how often we longed to have one of the islands on Lough Dergh, and to go and live there all by ourselves.”

“ We never dreamed of anything so luxurious as this, though. We knew nothing of limes and oranges, Lucy. We never fancied such a starry sky, or an air so loaded with perfume. I declare,” cried he,

with more energy, "it repays one for all the disappointment, to come and taste the luxury of such a night as this."

"And what is the disappointment you speak of, Tom?"

"I mean about our project—that blessed mine, by which we were to have amassed a fortune, and which has only yielded lead enough to shoot ourselves with."

"I never suspected that," said she, with a sigh.

"Of course you never did; nor am I in a great hurry to tell it even now. I'd not whisper it if Sir Brook were on the same island with us. Do you know, girl, that he resents a word against the mine as if it was a stain upon his own honour. For a while I used to catch up his enthusiasm, and think if we only go on steadily, if we simply persist, we are sure to succeed in the end. But when week after week rolled over, and not a trace of a mineral appeared—when the very workmen said we were toiling in vain—when I felt half-ashamed to meet the jeering questions of the neighbours, and used to skulk up to the shaft by the back way,—he remarked it, and said to me one morning, 'I am afraid, Tom, it is your sense of loyalty to me that keeps you here, and not your hope of success. Be frank, and tell me if this be so.' I blundered out something about my determination to share his fate, whatever it might be, and it would

have been lucky if I had stopped there ; but I went on to say that I thought the mine was an arrant delusion, and that the sooner we turned our backs on it, and addressed our energies to another quarter, the better. ‘You think so?’ said he, looking almost fiercely at me. ‘I am certain of it,’ said I, decisively; for I thought the moment had come when a word of truth could do him good service. He went out without speaking, and instead of going to Lavanna, where the mine is, he went over to Cagliari, and only came home late at night. The next morning, while we were taking our coffee before setting out, he said to me, ‘Don’t strap on your knapsack to-day. I don’t mean you should come down into the shaft again.’ ‘How so?’ asked I; ‘what have I said or done that could offend you?’ ‘Nothing, my dear boy,’ said he, laying his hand on my shoulder; ‘but I cannot bear you should meet this dreary life of toil without the one thing that can lighten its gloom—Hope. I have managed, therefore, to raise a small sum on the mine; for,’ said he, with a sly laugh, ‘there are men in Cagliari who don’t take the despondent view you have taken of it; and I have written to my old friend at the Horse Guards to give you a commission, and you shall go and be a soldier.’ ‘And leave you here, sir, all alone?’ ‘Far from alone, lad. I have that companion which you tell me never joined *you*. I have Hope with *me*.’

‘Then I’ll stay too, sir, and try if he’ll not give me his company yet. At all events, I shall have *yours*; and there is nothing I know that could recompense me for the loss of it.’ It was not very easy to turn him from his plan, but I insisted so heartily—for I’d have stayed on now, if it were to have entailed a whole life of poverty—that he gave in at last; and from that hour to this, not a word of other than agreement has passed between us. For my own part, I began to work with a will, and a determination that I never felt before; and perhaps I overtaxed my strength, for I caught this fever by remaining till the heavy dews began to fall, and in this climate it is always a danger.”

“And the mine, Tom—did it grow better?”

“Not a bit. I verily believe we never saw ore from that day. We got upon yellow clay, and lower down upon limestone rock, and then upon water; and we are pumping away yet, and old Sir Brook is just as much interested by the decrease of the water as if he saw a silver floor beneath it. ‘We’ve got eight inches less this morning, Tom; we are doing famously now.’ I declare to you, Lucy, when I saw his fine cheery look and bright honest eye, I thought how far better this man’s fancies are than the hard facts of other people; and I’d rather have his great nature than all the wealth success could bring us.”

"My own dear brother!" was all she could say, as she grasped his hand, and held it with both her own.

"The worst of all is, that in the infatuation he feels about this mining project he forgets everything else. Letters come to him from agents and men of business asking for speedy answers; some occasionally come to tell that funds upon which he had reckoned to meet certain payments had been withdrawn from his banker long since. When he reads these, he ponders a moment, and mutters, 'The old story, I suppose. It is so easy to write Brook Fossbrooke;' and then the whole seems to pass out of his mind, and he'll say, 'Come along, Tom; we must push matters a little; I'll want some coin by the end of the month.'

"When I grew so weak that I couldn't go to the mine, the accounts he used to give me daily made me think we must be prospering. He would come back every night so cheery and so hopeful, and his eyes would sparkle as he'd tell of a bright vein that they'd just 'struck.' He owned that the men were less sanguine, but what could they know? they had no other teaching than the poor experiences of daily labour. If they saw lead or silver, they believed in it. To him, however, the signs of the coming ore were enough; and then he would open a paper full of dark earth in which a few shining particles

might be detected, and point them out to me as the germs of untold riches. 'These are silver, Tom, every one of them; they are oxidised, but still perfectly pure. I've seen the natives in Ceylon washing earth not richer than this;' and the poor fellow would make this hopeful tidings the reason for treating me to champagne, which in an unlucky moment the Doctor said would be good for me, and which Sir Brook declared always disagreed with him. But I don't believe it, Lucy—I don't believe it! I am certain that he suffered many a privation to give me luxuries that he wouldn't share. Shall I tell you the breakfast I saw him eating one morning? I had gone to his room to speak to him before he started to the mine, and opening the door gently, I surprised him at his breakfast—a piece of brown bread and a cup of coffee without milk was his meal, to support him till he came home at night-fall. I knew if he were aware that I had seen him that it would have given him great distress, so I crept quietly back to my bed, and lay down to think of this once pampered, flattered gentleman, and how grand the nature must be that could hold up uncomplaining and unshaken under such poverty as this. Nor is it that he ignores the past, Lucy, or strives to forget it—far from that. He is full of memories of bygone events and people, but he talks of his own part in the grand world he once lived in

as one might talk of another individual ; nor is there the semblance of a regret that all this splendour has passed away never to return. He will be here on Sunday to pay us a visit, Lucy ; and though perhaps you'll find him sadly changed in appearance, you'll see that his fine nature is the same as ever."

"And will he persist in this project, Tom, in spite of all failure, and in defiance of hope?"

"That's the very point I'm puzzled about. If he decide to go on, so must I. I'll not leave him, whatever come of it."

"No, no, Tom ; that I know you will not do."

"His confidence of success is unshaken. It was only t'other night, as we sat at a very frugal supper, he said, 'You'll remember all this, Tom, one of these days ; and as you sip your burgundy, you'll tell your friends how jolly we thought ourselves over our little acid wine and an onion.' I did not dare to say what was uppermost in my thoughts, that I disbelieved in the burgundy era."

"It would have been cruel to have done it."

"He had the habit, he tells me, in his days of palmiest prosperity, of going off by himself on foot, and wandering about for weeks, roughing it amongst all sorts of people—gipsies, miners, charcoal-burners in the German forests, and suchlike. He said, without something of this sort, he would have grown to believe that all the luxuries he lived amongst were

bona fide necessities of life. He was afraid too, he said, they would become part of him; for his theory is, never let your belongings master your own nature."

"There is great romance in such a man."

"Ah! there you have it, Lucy; that's the key to his whole temperament; and I'd not be surprised if he had been crossed in some early love."

"Would that account for all his capricious ways?" said she, smiling.

"My own experiences can tell me nothing; but I have a sister who could perhaps help me to an explanation. Eh, Lucy? What think you?"

She tried to laugh off the theme, but the attempt only half succeeded, and she turned away her head to hide her confusion.

Tom took her hand between his own, and patted it affectionately.

"I want no confessions, my own dear Lucy," said he, gently; "but if there is anything which, for your own happiness or for my honour, I ought to know, you will tell me of it, I am certain."

"There is nothing," said she, with a faint gasp.

"And you would tell me if there had been?"

She nodded her head, but did not trust herself to speak.

"And grandpapa, Lucy?" said he, trying to divert her thoughts from what he saw was oppressing her;

"has he forgiven me yet? or does he still harp on about my presumption and self-sufficiency?"

"He is more forgiving than you think, Tom," said she, smiling.

"I am not so sure of that. He wrote me a long letter some time back—a sort of lecture on the faults and shortcomings of my disposition, in which he clearly showed, that if I had all the gifts which my own self-confidence ascribed to me, and a score more that I never dreamed of, they would go for nothing—absolutely nothing, so long as they were allied with my unparalleled—no, he didn't call it impudence, but something very near it. He told me that men of my stamp were like the people who traded on credit, and always cut a sorry figure when their accounts came to be audited; and, perhaps to stave off the hour of my bankruptcy, he enclosed me fifty pounds."

"So like him!" said she, proudly.

"I suppose it was. Indeed, as I read his note, I thought I heard him talking it. There was an acrid flippancy about it that smacked of his very voice."

"Oh, Tom, I will not let you say that."

"I'll think it all the same, Lucy. His letter brought him back to my mind so palpably, that I thought I stood there before him on that morning when he delivered that memorable discourse on my character after luncheon."

"Did you reply to him?"

"Yes, I replied," said he, with a dry sententiousness that sounded as though he wished the subject to drop.

"Do tell me what you said. I hope you took it in good part. I am sure you could not have shown any resentment at his remarks."

"No ; I rather think I showed great forbearance. I simply said, 'My dear Lord Chief Baron, I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, of which I accept everything but the enclosure.—I am, faithfully yours.'"

"And refused his gift?"

"Of course I did. The good counsel without the money, or the last without the counsel, would have been all very well ; but coming together, in what a false position the offer placed me ! I remember that same day we happened to have an unusually meagre dinner, but I drank the old man's health after it in some precious bad wine ; and Sir Brook, who knew nothing about the letter, joined in the toast, and pronounced a very pretty little eulogium on his vigour and energy ; and thus ended the whole incident."

"If you only knew him better, Tom ! if you knew him as I know him !"

Tom shrugged his shoulders, and merely said, "It was nicely done, though, not to tell *you* about this. There was delicacy in *that*."

Lucy went on now to relate all his kind intentions towards Tom when the news of his illness arrived—how he had conferred with Beattie about sending out a doctor, and how, at such a sacrifice to his own daily habits, he had agreed that she should come out to Cagliari. “And you don’t know how much this cost him, Master Tom,” said she, laughing; “for however little store you may lay by my company, he prizes it, and prizes it highly, too, I promise you; and then there was another reason which weighed against his letting me come out here—he has got some absurd prejudice against Sir Brook. I call it absurd, because I have tried to find out to what to trace it, and could not; but a chance expression or two that fell from Mrs Sewell leads me to suppose the impression was derived from them.”

“I don’t believe he knows the Sewells. I never heard him speak of them. I’ll ask when he comes over here. By the way, how do you like them yourself?”

“I scarcely know. I liked her at first—that is, I thought I should like her; and I fancied, too, it was her wish that I might—but——”

“But what? What does this ‘but’ mean?”

“It means that she has puzzled me, and my hope of liking her depends on my discovering that I have misunderstood her.”

“That’s a riddle, if ever there was one! but I sup-

pose it comes to this, that if you have read her aright you do not like her."

"I wish I could show you a letter she wrote me."

"And why can't you?"

"I don't think I can tell you even that, Tom."

"What a mysterious damsel you have grown! Does this come of your living with that great law lord, Lucy? If so, tell him from me he has spoiled you sadly. How frank you were long ago!"

"That is true," said she, sighing.

"How I wish we could go back to that time, with all its dreaminess and all its castle-building. Do you remember, Lu, when we used to set off of a morning in the boat on a voyage of discovery, as we called it, and find out new islands and new creeks, and give them names?"

"Do I not! Oh, Tom, were we not a thousand times happier then than we knew we were?"

"That's a bit of a bull, Lucy, but it's true all the same. I know all you mean, and I agree with you."

"If we had troubles, what light ones they were!"

"Ay, that's true. We were not grubbing for lead in those days, and finding only quartz; and our poor hearts, Lucy, were whole enough then." He gave a half malicious laugh as he said this; but, correcting himself quickly, he drew her towards

him and said, "Don't be angry with me, dear Lu ; you know of old what a reckless tongue I've got."

"Was that thunder, Tom? There it is again. What is it?"

"That's a storm getting up. It's coming from the south'ard. See how the drift is flying overhead, and all the while the sea beneath is like a mill-pond! Watch the stars now, and you'll see how, one by one, they will drop out, as if extinguished ; and mark the little splash—it is barely audible—that begins upon the beach. There! did you hear that—that rushing sound like wind through the trees? That's the sea getting up. How I wish I was strong enough to stay out here. I'd like to show you a 'Levanter,' girl—a regular bit of Southern passion, not increasing slowly, like our Northern wrath, but bursting out in its full fury in an instant. Here it comes!" and as he spoke two claps of thunder shook the air, followed by a long clattering roll like musketry, and the sea, upheaving, surged heavily hither and thither, while the air was still and calm ; and then, as though let loose from their caverns, the winds swept past with a wild shrill whistle that swelled into a perfect roar. The whole surface of the sea became at once white, and the wind, sweeping across the crests of the waves, carried away a blinding drift that added to the darkness. The thunder, too, rolled on unceasingly, and great

flashes of lightning broke through the blackness, and displayed tall masts and spars of ships far out to sea, rocking fearfully, and in the next instant lost to sight in the dense darkness.

"Here comes the rain, and we must run for it," said Tom, as a few heavy drops fell. A solemn pause in the storm ensued, and then, as though the very sky was rent, the water poured down in cataracts. Laughing merrily, they made for the cottage, and though but a few yards off, were drenched thoroughly ere they reached it.

"It's going to be a terrific night," said Tom, as he passed from window to window, looking to the bars and fastenings. "The great heat always brings one of the Levant storms, and the fishermen here know it so well, that on seeing certain signs at sunset they draw up all their boats on shore, and even secure the roofs of their cabins with strong spars and stones."

"I hope poor old Nicholas is safe by this time. Could he have reached Cagliari by this?" said Lucy.

"Yes, he is snug enough. The old rogue is sitting at his supper this minute, cursing the climate, and the wine, and the place, and the day he came to it."

"Come, Tom! I think he bears everything better than I expected."

"Bears everything better! Why, child, what has he to bear that you and I have not to bear? Is there one privation here that falls to his share without coming to us?"

"And what would be the value of that good blood you are so proud of Tom, if it would not make us as proof against petty annoyances as against big dangers?"

"I declare time and place make no change on you. You are the same disputatious damsel here that you used to be beside the Shannon. Have I not told you scores of times you must never quote what one has once said, when it comes in opposition to a present opinion?"

"But if I cease to quote you, Tom, whence am I to derive those maxims of wisdom I rely upon so implicitly?"

"Take care, young lady—take care," said he, shaking his finger at her. "Every fort has its weak side. If you assail me by the brain, I may attack you at the heart! How will it be then, eh?" Colouring till her face and neck were crimson, she tried to laugh; but though her lips parted, no sound came forth, and after a second or two of struggle, she said, "Good night," and rushed away.

"Good night, Lu," cried he after her. "Look well to your window-fastenings, or you will be blown away before morning."

CHAPTER XLVI.

A LEVANTER.

THE storm raged fearfully during the night, and the sea rose to a height that made many believe some earthquake had occurred in one of the islands near. Old trees that resisted the gales of former hurricanes were uprooted, and the swollen streams tore down amongst the fallen timber, adding to the clamour of the elements and increasing the signs of desolation and ruin that abounded.

It was, as Tom called it, a "regular Levanter," one of those storms which in a brief twenty-four hours can do the work of years in destruction and change.

Amongst the group of fishermen who crouched under a rock on the shore, sad predictions were uttered as to the fate of such as were at sea that night, and the disasters of bygone years were recalled, and the story of a Russian liner that was lost off Spartivento, and the Spanish admiral who

was wrecked on the rocks of Melissa, were told with all the details eyewitnesses could impart to them.

“Those fellows have driven me half distracted, Lucy,” said Tom, as he came in wet and dripping, “with their tales of shipwreck ; and one of them declares that he saw a large paddle-wheel steamer under English colours drifting to the south’ard this morning, perfectly helpless and unmanageable. I wish I could get over to Cagliari, and hear tidings of her.”

“Of course that is impossible,” said she, with a shudder.

“So they tell me. They say there’s not a boat in the island would live five minutes in that sea.”

“And the gale seems increasing too.”

“So it does. They say, just before the storm ends it blows its very hardest at the finish, and then stops as suddenly as it burst forth.”

By noon the gale began to decline, the sun burst out, and the sea gradually subsided, and in a few hours the swollen torrents changed to tiny rivulets, clear as crystal. The birds were singing in the trees, and the whole landscape, like a newly-washed picture, came out in fresher and brighter colour than ever. Nor was it easy to believe that the late hurricane had ever existed, so little trace of it could be seen on that rocky island.

A little before sunset a small “latiner” rounded

the point, and stood in towards the little bay. She had barely wind enough to carry her along, and was fully an hour in sight before she anchored. As it was evident she was a Cagliari boat, Tom was all impatient for her news, and went on board of her at once. The skipper handed him a letter from Sir Brook, saying, "I was to give you this, sir, and say I was at your orders." Tom broke the seal, but before he had read half-a-dozen lines, he cried out "All right! shove me on shore, and come in to me in an hour. By that time I'll tell you what I decide on."

"Here's great news, Lucy," cried he. "The Cadmus troop-ship has put into Cagliari disabled, foremast lost, one paddle-wheel carried away, all the boats smashed, but her Majesty's —th safe and sound. Colonel Cave very jolly, and Major Trafford, if you have heard of such a person, wild with joy at the disaster of being shipwrecked."

"Oh, Tom, do be serious. What is it at all?" said she, as, pale with anxiety, she caught his arm to steady herself.

"Here's the despatch—read it yourself if you won't believe me. This part here is all about the storm and the other wrecks; but here, this is the important part, in your eyes at least.

"'Cave is now with me up here, and Trafford is to join us to-night. The ship cannot possibly be fit for

sea before ten days to come; and the question is, Shall we go over and visit you, or will you and Lucy come here? One or other of these courses it must be, and it is for you to decide which suits you best. You know as well as myself what a sorry place this is to ask dear Lucy to come to, but, on the other hand, I know nothing as to the accommodation your cottage offers. For my own part it does not signify; I can sleep on board any craft that takes me over; but have you room for the soldiers?—I mean, Cave and Trafford. I have no doubt they will be easily put up; and if they could be consulted, would rather bivouac under the olives than not come. At all events, let the boat bring yourselves, or the invitation for us,—and at once, for the impatience of one here (I am too discreet to particularise) is pushing my own endurance to its limits.’

“Now, Lucy, what’s it to be? Decide quickly, for the skipper will be here soon for his answer.”

“I declare I don’t know, Tom,” said she, faltering at every word; “the cottage is very small, the way we live here very simple: I scarcely think it possible we can ask any one to be a guest——”

“So that you opine we ought to go over to Cagliari?” burst he in.

“I think *you* ought, Tom, certainly,” said she, still more faintly.

"I see," said he, dryly, "you'll not be afraid of being left alone here?"

"No, not in the least," said she, and her voice was now a mere whisper, and she swayed slightly back and forward like one about to faint.

"Such being the case," resumed Tom, "what you advise strikes me as admirable. I can make your apologies to old Sir Brook. I can tell him, besides, that you had scruples on the propriety—there may be Mrs Grundys at Cagliari, who would be shocked, you know; and then, if you should get on here comfortably, and not feel it too lonely, why, perhaps, I might be able to stay with them till they sail."

She tried to mutter a Yes, but her lips moved without a sound.

"So that is settled, eh?" cried he, looking full at her.

She nodded, and then turned away her head.

"What an arrant little hypocrite it is!" said he, drawing his arm around her waist; "and with all the will in the world to deceive, what a poor actress! My child, I know your heart is breaking this very moment at my cruelty, my utter barbarity, and if you had only the courage you'd tell me I was a beast!"

"Oh! Tom—oh! dear Tom," said she, hiding her face on his shoulder.

"Dear Tom, of course, when there's no help for it.

And this is a specimen of the candour and frankness you promised me !”

“ But, Tom,” said she, faltering at every word, “ it is not—as you think ; it is not as you believe.”

“ What is not as I believe ?” said he, quickly.

“ I mean,” added she, trembling with shame and confusion, “ there is no more—that it’s over—all over !” And, unable to endure longer, she burst into tears, and buried her face between her hands.

“ My own dear, dear sister,” said he, pressing her to his side, “ why have you not told me of this before ?”

“ I could not, I could not,” sobbed she.

“ One word more, Lu, and only one. Who was in fault ? I mean, darling, was this *your* doing or *his* ?”

“ Neither, Tom ; at least I think so. I believe that some deceit was practised—some treachery ; but I don’t know what, nor how. In fact, it is all a mystery to me ; and my misery makes it none the clearer.”

“ Tell me, at least, whatever you know.”

“ I will bring you the letter,” said she, disengaging herself from him.

“ And did he write to you ?” asked he, fiercely.

“ No ; *he* did not write—from *him* I have heard nothing.”

She rushed out of the room as she spoke, leaving Tom in a state of wild bewilderment. Few as were

the minutes of her absence, the interval to him seemed like an age of torture and doubt. Weak, and broken by illness, his fierce spirit was nothing the less bold and defiant; and over and over, as he waited there, he swore to himself to bring Trafford to a severe reckoning if he found that he had wronged his sister.

“How noble of her to hide all this sorrow from me, because she saw my suffering! What a fine nature! And it is with hearts like these fellows trifle and tamper, till they end by breaking them! Poor thing! might it not be better to leave her in the delusion of thinking him not a scoundrel, than to denounce and brand him?”

As he thus doubted and debated with himself, she entered the room. Her look was now calm and composed, but her face was lividly pale, and her very lips bloodless. “Tom,” said she, gravely, “I don’t think I would let you see this letter but for one reason, which is, that it will convince you that you have no cause of quarrel whatever with *him*.”

“Give it to me—let me read it,” burst he in impatiently; “I have neither taste nor temper for any more riddles—leave me to find my own road through this labyrinth.”

“Shall I leave you alone, Tom?” said she, timidly, as she handed him the letter.

“Yes, do so. I think all the quicker when there’s

none by me." He turned his back to the light as he sat down, and began the letter.

"I believe I ought to tell you first," said she, as she stood with her hand on the lock of the door, "the circumstances under which that was written."

"Tell me nothing whatever—let me grope out my own road;" and now she moved away and left him.

He read the letter from beginning to end, and then re-read it. He saw there were many allusions to which he had no clue; but there was a tone in it which there was no mistaking, and that tone was treachery. The way in which the writer deprecated all possible criticism of her life, at the outset showed how sensitive she was to such remark, and how conscious of being open to it. Tom knew enough of life to be aware that the people who affect to brave the world are those who are past defying it. So far at least he felt he had read her truly; but he had to confess to himself that beyond this it was not easy to advance.

On the second reading, however, all appeared more clear and simple. It was the perfidious apology of a treacherous woman for a wrong which she had hoped, but had not been able, to inflict. "I see it all," cried Tom: "her jealousy has been stimulated by discovering Trafford's love for Lucy, and this is her revenge. It is just possible, too, she may have entangled him. There are meshes that men can scarcely

keep free of. Trafford may have witnessed the hardship of her daily life—seen the indignities to which she submits—and possibly pitied her; if he has gone no further than this, there is no great mischief. What a clever creature she must be!” thought he again—“how easy it ought to be for a woman like that to make a husband adore her, and yet these women will not be content with that. Like the cheats at cards, they don’t care to win by fair play.” He went to the door, and called out “Lucy!”

The tone of his voice sounded cheerily, and she came on the instant.

“How did you meet after this?” asked he, as she entered.

“We have not met since that. I left the Priory, and came abroad three days after I received it.”

“So then that was the secret of the zeal to come out and nurse poor brother Tom, eh?” said he, laughing.

“You know well if it was,” said she, as her eyes swam in tears.

“No, no, my poor dear Lu, I never thought so; and right glad am I to know that you are not to live in companionship with the woman who wrote that letter.”

“You think ill of her?”

“I will not tell you half how badly I think of her; but Trafford is as much wronged here as any one,

or else I am but a sorry decipherer of mysterious signs."

"Oh, Tom!" cried she, clasping his hand and looking at him as though she yearned for one gleam of hope.

"It is so that I read it; but I do not like to rely upon my own sole judgment in such a case. Will you trust me with this letter, and will you let me show it to Sir Brook? He is wonderfully acute in tracing people's real meaning through all the misty surroundings of expression. I will go over to Cagliari at once, and see him. If all be as I suspect, I will bring them back with me. If Sir Brook's opinion be against mine, I will believe him to be the wiser man, and come back alone."

"I consent to everything, Tom, if you will give me but one pledge—you must give it seriously, solemnly."

"I guess what you mean, Lucy; your anxious face has told the story without words. You are afraid of my hot temper. You think I will force a quarrel on Trafford—yes, I knew what was in your thoughts. Well, on my honour, I will not. This I promise you faithfully."

She threw herself into his arms and kissed him, muttering, in a low voice, "My own dear brother" in his ear.

"It is just as likely you may see me back again

to-morrow, Lucy, and alone too. Mind that, girl! The version I have taken of this letter may turn out to be all wrong. Sir Brook may show me how, and where, and why I have mistaken it; and if so, Lu, I must have a pledge from you—you know what I mean."

"You need none, Tom," said she, proudly; "you shall not be ashamed of your sister."

"That was said like yourself, and I have no fears about you now. You will be anxious—you can't help being anxious, my poor child—about all this; but your uncertainty shall be as short as I can make it. Look out for me, at all events, with the evening breeze. I'll try and catch the land-wind to take me up. If I fly no ensign, Lucy, I am alone; if you see the 'Jack,' it will mean I have company with me. Do you understand me?"

She nodded, but did not speak.

"Now, Lu, I'll just get my traps together, and be off; that light Tra-montana wind will last till day-break, and by that time the sea-breeze will carry me along pleasantly. How I'd like to have you with me!"

"It is best as it is, Tom," said she, trying to smile.

"And if all goes wrong—I mean if all does not go right—Lucy, I have got a plan, and I am sure Sir Brook won't oppose it. We'll just pack up, wish the lead

and the cobalt and the rest of it a good-bye, and start for the Cape and join father. There's a project after your own heart, girl."

"Oh, Tom, dearest, if we could do that!"

"Think over it till we meet again, and it will at least keep away darker thoughts."

CHAPTER XLVII.

BY THE MINE AT LAVANNA.

THE mine of Lavanna, on which Sir Brook had placed all his hopes of future fortune, was distant from the town of Cagliari about eighteen miles. It was an old, a very old shaft; Livy had mentioned it, and Pliny, in one of his letters, compares people of sanguine and hopeful temperament with men who believe in the silver ore of Lavanna. There had therefore been a traditionary character of failure attached to the spot, and not impossibly this very circumstance had given it a greater value in Fossbrooke's estimation; for he loved a tough contest with fortune, and his experiences had given him many such.

Popular opinion certainly set down the mine as a disastrous enterprise, and the list of those who had been ruined by the speculation was a long one. Nothing daunted by all he had heard, and fully convinced in his own mind that his predecessors had

earned their failures by their own mistakes, Fossbrooke had purchased the property many years before, and there it had remained, like many of his other acquisitions, uncared for and unthought of, till the sudden idea had struck him that he wanted to be rich, and to be rich instantaneously.

He had coffee-plantations somewhere in Ceylon, and he had purchased largely of land in Canada; but to utilise either of these would be a work of time, whereas the mine would yield its metal bright and ready for the market. It was so much actual available money at once.

His first care was to restore, so far as to make it habitable, a dreary old ruinous barrack of a house, which a former speculator had built to hold all his officials and dependants. A few rooms that opened on a tumble-down terrace—of which some marble urns yet remained to bear witness of former splendour—were all that Sir Brook could manage to make habitable, and even these would have seemed miserable and uncomfortable to any one less bent on “roughing it” than himself.

Some guns and fishing-gear covered one wall of the room that served as dinner-room; and a few rude shelves on the opposite side contained such specimens of ore as were yet discovered, and the three or four books which formed their library; the space over the chimney displaying a sort of trophy

of pipes of every sort and shape, from the well-browned meerschaum to the ignoble "dudeen" of Irish origin.

These were the only attempts at decoration they had made, but it was astonishing with what pleasure the old man regarded them, and with what pride he showed the place to such as accidentally came to see him.

"I'll have a room yet, just arrayed in this fashion, Tom," would he say, "when we have made our fortune, and go back to live in England. I'll have a sort of snugger, a correct copy of this; all the old beams in the ceiling, and those great massive architraves round the doors, shall be exactly followed, and the massive stone mantelpiece; and it will remind us, as we sit there of a winter's night, of the jolly evenings we have had here after a hard day's work in the shaft. Won't I have the laugh at you, Tom, too, as I tell you of the wry face you used to make over our prospects, the hang-dog look you'd give when the water was gaining on us, and our new pump got choked!"

Tom would smile at all this, though secretly nourishing no such thoughts for the future. Indeed, he had for many a day given up all hope of making his fortune as a miner, and merely worked on with the dogged determination not to desert his friend.

On one of the large white walls of their sitting-

room, Sir Brook had sketched in charcoal a picture of the mine, in all the dreariest aspect of its poverty, and two sad-looking men, Tom and himself, working at the windlass over the shaft; and at the other extremity of the space there stood a picturesque mansion, surrounded with great forest trees, under which deer were grouped, and two men—the same—were riding up the approach on mettlesome horses, the elder of the two, with outstretched arm and hand, evidently directing his companion's attention to the rich scenes through which they passed. These were the "now" and "then" of the old man's vision, and he believed in them, as only those believe who draw belief from their own hearts, unshaken by all without.

It was at the close of a summer day, just in that brief moment when the last flicker of light tinges the earth at first with crimson and then with deep blue, to give way a moment later to black night, that Sir Brook sat with Colonel Cave after dinner, explaining to his visitor the fresco on the wall, and giving, so far as he might, his reasons to believe it a truthful foreshadowing of the future.

"But you tell me," said Cave, "that the speculation has proved the ruin of a score of fellows."

"So it has. Did you ever hear of the enterprise, at least of one worth the name, that had not its failures? or is success anything more in reality than

the power of reasoning out how and why others have succumbed, and how to avoid the errors that have beset them? The men who embarked in this scheme were alike deficient in knowledge and in capital."

"Ah, indeed!" muttered Cave, who did not exactly say what his looks implied. "Are you their superior in these requirements?"

Sir Brook was quick enough to note the expression, and hastily said, "I have not much to boast of myself in these respects, but I possess that which they never had—that without which men accomplish nothing in life, going through the world mere desultory rambles, and not like sturdy pilgrims, ever footing onward to the goal of their ambition. I have Faith!"

"And young Lendrick, what says he to it?"

"He scarcely shares my hopes, but he shows no signs of backwardness."

"He is not sanguine, then?"

"Nature did not make him so, and a man can no more alter his temperament than his stature. I began life with such a capital of confidence that, though I have been an arrant spendthrift, I have still a strong store by me. The cunning fellows laugh at us and call us dupes; but let me tell you, Cave, if accounts were squared, it might turn out that even as a matter of policy incredulity has not much to

boast of, and were it not so, this world would be simply intolerable."

"I'd like, however, to hear that your mine was not all outlay," said Cave, bringing back the theme to its starting-point.

"So should I," said Fossbrooke, dryly.

"And I'd like to learn that some one more conversant—more professional in these matters——"

"Less ignorant than myself, in a word," said Fossbrooke, laughing. "You mean you'd like to hear a more trustworthy prophet predict as favourably; and with all that I agree heartily."

"There's no one would be better pleased to be certain that the fine palace on the wall there was not a castle in Spain. I think you know that."

"I do, Cave—I know it well; but bear in mind, your best runs in the hunting-field have not always been when you have killed your fox. The pursuit, when it is well sustained, with its fair share of perils met, dared, and overcome—this is success. Whatever keeps a man's heart up and his courage high to the end, is no mean thing. I own to you I hope to win, and I don't know that there is any such failure possible as would quench this hope."

"Just what Trafford said of you when he came back from that fishing excursion," cried Cave, as though carried away by a sudden burst of thought.

“What a good fellow he is! Shall we have him up here to-night?”

“No; some of our men have been getting into scrapes at Cagliari, and I have been obliged to ask him to stay there and keep things in order.”

“Is his quarrel with his family final, or is there still an opening to reconciliation?”

“I’m afraid not. Some old preference of his mother’s for the youngest son has helped on the difference; and then certain stories she brought back from Ireland of Lionel’s doings there, or, at least, imputed doings, have, I suspect, steeled his father’s heart completely against him.”

“I’ll stake my life on it there is nothing dishonourable to attach to him. What do they allege?”

“I have but a garbled version of the story, for from Trafford himself I have heard nothing; but I know, for I have seen the bills, he has lost largely at play to a very dangerous creditor, who also accuses him of designs on his wife; and the worst of this is, that the latter suspicion originated with Lady Trafford.”

“I could have sworn it. It was a woman’s quarrel, and she would sacrifice her own son for vengeance. I’ll be able to pay her a very refined compliment when I next see her, Cave, and tell her that she is not in the least altered from the day I first

met her. And has Lionel been passed over in the entail?"

"So he believes, and I think with too good reason."

"And all because he loved a girl whose alliance would confer honour on the proudest house in the land. I think I'll go over and pay Holt a visit. It is upwards of forty years since I saw Sir Hugh, and I have a notion I could bring him to reason."

Cave shook his head doubtingly.

"Ay, to be sure," sighed Fossbrooke, "it does make a precious difference whether one remonstrates at the head of a fine fortune or pleads for justice in a miner's jacket. I was forgetting that, Cave. Indeed, I am always forgetting it. And have they made no sort of settlement on Lionel?—nothing to compensate him for the loss of his just expectations?"

"I suspect not. He has told me nothing beyond the fact that he is to have the purchase-money for the lieutenant-colonelcy, which I was ready and willing to vacate in his favour, but which we are unable to negotiate, because he owes a heavy sum, to the payment of which this must go."

"Can nothing be done with his creditor?—can we not manage to secure the debt, and pay the interest?"

"This same creditor is one not easily dealt with," said Cave, slowly.

“A money-lender?”

“No. He’s the man I just told you wanted to involve Trafford with his own wife. As dangerous a fellow as ever lived. I take shame to myself to own that, though acquainted with him for years, I never really knew his character till lately.”

“Don’t think the worse of yourself for that, Cave. The faculty to read bad men at sight argues too much familiarity with badness. I like to hear a fellow say, ‘I never so much as suspected it.’ Is this man’s name a secret?”

“No. Nothing of the kind. I don’t suppose you ever met him, but he is well known in the service—better perhaps in India than at home—he served on Rolffe’s staff in Bengal. His name is Sewell.”

“What! Dudley Sewell?”

“Yes; that’s his name. Do you know him?”

“Do I know him!” muttered the old man, as he bent down and supported his head upon his hand.

“And do I wrong him in thinking him a dangerous fellow?” asked Cave. But Fossbrooke made no answer; indeed, he never heard the question, so absorbed was he in his own thoughts.

“What do you know of him?” asked Cave, in a louder voice.

“Everything—everything! I know all that he has done, and scores of things he would have done

if he could. By what ill-luck was it that Trafford came to know this man?"

"They met at the Cape, and Trafford went to visit him when they came over to Ireland. I suspect—I do not know it—but I suspect that there was some flirtation in the case. She is extremely pretty, and a coquette."

"I declare," said Fossbrooke, as he arose and paced the room, totally unattentive to all the other said—"I declare I begin sometimes to think that the only real activity in life is on the part of the scoundrels. Half the honest people in the world pass their lives in forming good intentions, while the rogues go straight at their work and do it. Do you think, Cave, that Trafford would tell me frankly what has passed between this man and himself?"

"I'm not sure. I mean, he might have some reserve on one point, and that is the very point on which his candour would be most important. There have been letters, it would seem, that Sewell has got hold of, and threatens exposure, if some enormous demand be not complied with."

"What! Is the scoundrel so devoid of devices that he has to go back on an old exploded villany? Why, he played that game at Rangoon, and got five thousand pounds out of poor Beresford."

"I have heard something of that."

"Have heard of it! Who that ever served in

India is not familiar with the story? What does Trafford mean by not coming up here, and telling me the whole story?"

"I'll tell you what he means, Fossbrooke: he is heartily ashamed of himself; he is in love with another, and he knows that you know it; but he believes you may have heard stories to his detriment, and, tied as he is—or fancies he is—by a certain delicate reserve, he cannot go into his exculpation. There, in one word, is the reason that he is not here to-night; he asked me to put him on special duty, and save him from all the awkwardness of meeting you with a half-confidence."

"And I, meanwhile, have written off to Tom Lendrick to come over here with his sister, or to let us go and pay them a visit at the island."

"You never told me of this."

"Why should I? I was using the rights I possess over you as my guests, doing for you what I deemed best for your amusement."

"What answer have they given you?"

"None up to this; indeed, there has been scarcely time; and now, from what you tell me, I do not well know what answer I'd like to have from them."

For several minutes neither uttered a word; at last Fossbrooke said, "Trafford was right not to meet me. It has saved him some prevarication, and me some passion. Write, and tell him I said so."

"I can scarcely do that, without avowing that I have revealed to you more than I am willing to own."

"When you told me in whose hands he was, you told me more than all the rest. Few men can live in Dudley Sewell's intimacy, and come unscathed out of the companionship."

"That would tell ill for myself, for I have been of late on terms of much intimacy with him."

"You haven't played with him?"

"Ay, but I have; and what's more, won of him," said Cave, laughing.

"You profited little by that turn of fortune," said Fossbrooke, sarcastically.

"You imply that he did not pay his debt; but you are wrong: he came to me the morning after we had played, and acquitted the sum lost."

"Why, I am entangling myself in the miracles I hear! That Sewell should lose is strange enough: that he should pay his losses is simply incredible."

"Your opinion of him would seem to be a very indifferent one."

"Far from it, Cave. It is without any qualification whatever. I deem him the worst fellow I ever knew; nor am I aware of any greater misfortune to a young fellow entering on life than to have become his associate."

"You astonish me! I was prepared to hear things

of him that one could not justify, nor would have willingly done themselves, but not to learn that he was beyond the pale of honour."

"It is exactly where he stands, sir—beyond the pale of honour. I wish we had not spoken of him," said the old man, rising, and pacing the room. "The memory of that fellow is the bitterest draught I ever put to my lips; he has dashed my mind with more unworthy doubts and mean suspicions of other men than all my experience of life has ever taught me. I declare, I believe if I had never known him my heart would have been as hopeful to-day as it was fifty years ago."

"How came it that I never heard you speak of him?"

"Is it my wont, Cave, to talk of my disasters to my friends? You surely have known me long enough to say whether I dwell upon the reverses and disappointments of my life. It is a sorry choice of topics, perhaps, that is left to men old as myself when they must either be croakers or boasters. At all events, I have chosen the latter; and people bear with it the better, because they can smile at it."

"I wish with all my heart I had never played with Sewell, and still more that I had not won of him."

"Was it a heavy sum?"

"For a man like myself, a very heavy sum. I was led on—giving him his revenge, as it is called—till

I found myself playing for a stake which, had I lost, would have cost me the selling my commission."

Fossbrooke nodded, as though to say he had known of such incidents in the course of his life.

"When he appeared at my quarters the next morning to settle the debt, I was so overcome with shame, that I pledge you my word of honour, I believe I'd rather have been the loser, and taken all the ruin the loss would have brought down upon me."

"How your friend must have appreciated your difficulty!" said Fossbrooke, sarcastically.

"He was frank enough, at all events, to own that he could not share my sense of embarrassment. He jeered a little at my pretension to be an example to my young officers, as well he might. I had selected an unlucky moment to advance such a claim; and then he handed me over my winnings, with all the ease and indifference in life."

"I declare, Cave, I was expecting, to the very last moment, a different ending to your story. I waited to hear that he had handed you a bond of his wife's guardian, which, for prudential reasons, should not be pressed for prompt payment."

"Good heavens! what do you mean?" cried Cave, leaning over the table in intense eagerness. "Who could have told you this?"

"Beresford told me: he brought me the very document once to my house, with my own signature

annexed to it—an admirable forgery as ever was done. My seal, too, was there. By bad luck, however, the paper was stolen from me that very night—taken out of a locked portfolio. And when Beresford charged the fellow with the fraud, Sewell called him out, and shot him.”

Cave sat for several minutes like one stunned and overcome. He looked vacantly before him, but gave no sign of hearing or marking what was said to him. At last he arose, and, walking over to a table, unlocked his writing-desk, and took out a large packet, of which he broke the seal, and, without examining the contents, handed it to Fossbroke, saying—

“Is that like it?”

“It is the very bond itself: there’s my signature. I wish I wrote as good a hand now,” said he, laughing. “It is as I always said, Cave,” cried he, in a louder, fuller voice. “The world persists in calling this swindler a clever fellow, and there never was a greater mistake. The devices of the scoundrel are the very fewest imaginable; and he repeats his three or four tricks, with scarcely a change, throughout a lifelong.”

“And this is a forgery!” muttered Cave, as he bent over the document and scanned it closely.

“You shall see me prove it such. You’ll intrust me with it. I’ll promise to take better care of it this time.”

"Of course. What do you mean to do?"

"Nothing by course of law, Cave. So far I promise you, and I know it is of that you are most afraid. No, my good friend. If you never figure in a witness-box till brought there by *me*, you may snap your fingers for many a day at cross-examinations."

"This cannot be made the subject of a personal altercation," said Cave, hesitatingly.

"If you mean a challenge, certainly not; but it may be made the means of extricating Trafford from his difficulties with this man, and I can already see where and what these difficulties are."

"You allude to the wife?"

"We will not speak of that, Cave," said Fossbrooke, colouring deeply. "Mrs Sewell has claims on my regard, that nothing her husband could do, nothing that he might become, could efface. She was the daughter of the best and truest friend, and the most noble-hearted fellow I ever knew. I have long ceased to occupy any place in her affections, but I shall never cease to remember whose child she was—how he loved her, and how, in the last words he ever spoke, he asked me to befriend her. In those days I was a rich man, and had the influence that wealth confers. I had access to great people too, and, wanting nothing for myself, could easily be of use to others; but, where am I wandering to? I

only intended to say that *her* name is not to be involved in any discussion those things may occasion. What are these voices I hear outside in the court? Surely that must be Tom Lendrick I hear." He arose and flung open the window, and at the same instant a merry voice cried out, "Here we are, Sir Brook,—Trafford and myself. I met him in the Piazza at Cagliari, and carried him off with me."

"Have you brought anything to eat with you?" asked Fossbrooke.

"That I have—half a sheep and a turkey," said Tom.

"Then you are thrice welcome," said Fossbrooke, laughing; "for Cave and I are reduced to fluids. Come up at once; the fellows will take care of your horses. We'll make a night of it, Cave," said the old man, as he proceeded to cover the table with bottles. "We'll drink success to the Mine! We'll drink to the day when, as lieutenant-general, you'll come and pay me a visit in that great house yonder; and here come the boys to help us."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

UP AT THE MINE.

THOUGH they carried their convivialities into a late hour of the night, Sir Brook was stirring early on the next morning, and was at Tom Lendrick's bedside ere he was awake.

"We had no time for much talk together, Tom, when you came up last night," said he; "nor is there much now, for I am off to England within an hour."

"Off to England! and the mine?"

"The mine must take care of itself, Tom, till you are stronger and able to look after it. My care at present is to know if Trafford be going back with you."

"I meant that he should; in fact, I came over here expressly to ask you what was best to be done. You can guess what I allude to; and I had brought with me a letter which Lucy thought you ought to read; and indeed I intended to be as cautious and circum-

spect as might be, but I was scarcely on shore when Trafford rushed across a street and threw his arm over my shoulder, and almost sobbed out his joy at seeing me. So overcome was I that I forgot all my prudence—all indeed that I came for. I asked him to come up with me—ay, and to come back too with me to the island and stay a week there.”

“I scarcely think that can be done,” said the old man, gravely. “I like Trafford well, and would be heartily glad I could like him still better; but I must learn more about him ere I consent to his going over to Maddalena. What is this letter you speak of?”

“You’ll find it in the pocket of my dressing-case there. Yes; that’s it.”

“It’s a longish epistle, but in a hand I well know—at least I knew it well long ago.” There was an indescribable sadness in the tone in which he said this, and he turned away that his face should not be seen. He seated himself in a recess of the window and read the letter from end to end. With a heavy sigh he laid it on the table, and muttered below his breath, “What a long long way to have journeyed from what I first saw her to *that* !”

Tom did not venture to speak, nor show by any sign that he had heard him, and the old man went on in broken sentences—“And to think that these are the fine natures—the graceful—the beautiful,

that are thus wrecked ! It is hard to believe it. In the very same characters of that letter I have read such things, so beautiful, so touching, so tender, as made the eyes overflow to follow them. You see I was right, Tom," cried he, aloud, in a strong stern voice, "when I said that she should not be your sister's companion. I told Sewell I would not permit it. I was in a position to dictate my own terms to him, and I did so. I must see Trafford about this ;" and as he spoke he arose and left the room.

While Tom proceeded to dress himself, he was not altogether pleased with the turn of events. If he had made any mistake in inviting Trafford to return with him, there would be no small awkwardness in recalling the invitation. He saw plainly enough he had been precipitate, but precipitation is one of those errors which, in their own cases, men are prone to ascribe to warm-heartedness. "Had I been as distrustful or suspicious as that publican yonder," is the burthen of their self-gratulation ; and in all that moral surgery where men operate on themselves, they cut very gingerly.

"Of course," muttered Tom, "I can't expect Sir Brook will take the same view of these things. Age and suspicion are simply convertible terms, and, thank heaven, I have not arrived at either."

"What are you thanking heaven for?" said Sir Brook, entering. "In nine cases out of ten men use

that formula as a measure of their own vanity. For which of your shortcomings were you professing your gratitude, Tom?"

"Have you seen Trafford, sir?" asked Tom, trying to hide his confusion by the question.

"Yes; we have had some talk together."

Tom waited to hear further, and showed by his air of expectation how eager he felt; but the old man made no sign of any disclosure, but sat there silent and wrapped in thought. "I asked him this," said the old man, fiercely, "'If you had got but one thousand pounds in all the world, would it have occurred to you to go down and stake it on a match of billiards against Jonathan?'" 'Unquestionably not,' he replied; 'I never could have dreamed of such presumption.'

"'And on what pretext, by what impulse of vanity,' said I, 'were you prompted to enter the lists with one every way your superior in tact, in craft, and in coquetry? If she accepted your clumsy addresses, did you never suspect that there was a deeper game at issue than your pretensions?'" 'You are all mistaken,' said he, growing crimson with shame as he spoke; 'I made no advances whatever. I made her certain confidences, it is true, and I asked her advice; and then as we grew to be more intimate we wrote to each other, and Sewell came upon my letters, and affected to think I was trying to steal his

wife's affection. She could have dispelled the suspicion at once. She could have given the key to the whole mystery, and why she did not is more than I can say. My unlucky accident just then occurred, and I only issued from my illness to hear that I had lost largely at play, and was so seriously compromised besides, that it was a question whether he should shoot me, or sue for a divorce.'

"It was clear enough that so long as he represented the heir to the Holt property, Sewell treated him with a certain deference; but when Trafford declared to his family that he would accept no dictation, but go his own road, whatever the cost, from that moment Sewell pressed his claims, and showed little mercy in his exactions.

"'And what's your way out of this mess?' asked I. 'What do you propose to do?'

"'I have written to my father, begging he will pay off this debt for me—the last I shall ever ask him to acquit. I have requested my brother to back my petition; and I have told Sewell the steps I have taken, and promised him if they should fail that I will sell out, and acquit my debt at the price of my commission.'

"'And at the price of your whole career in life?'

"'Just so. If you'll not employ me in the mine, I must turn navy.'

"'And how, under such circumstances as these,

can you accept Tom Lendrick's invitation, and go over to Maddalena ?'

" 'I could not well say no when he asked me, but I determined not to go. I only saw the greater misery I should bring on myself. Cave can send me off in haste to Gibraltar or to Malta. In fact, I pass off the stage, and never turn up again during the rest of the performance.' "

"Poor fellow!" said Tom, with deep feeling.

"He was so manly throughout it all," said Fossbrooke, "so straightforward and so simple. Had there been a grain of coxcomb in his nature, the fellow would have thought the woman in love with him, and made an arrant fool of himself in consequence, but his very humility saved him. I'm not sure, Master Tom, you'd have escaped so safely—eh?"

"I don't see why you think so."

"Now for action," said Fossbrooke. "I must get to England at once. I shall go over to Holt, and see if I can do anything with Sir Hugh. I expect little, for when men are under the frown of fortune they plead with small influence. I shall then pass over to Ireland. With Sewell I can promise myself more success. I may be away three or four weeks. Do you think yourself strong enough to come back here and take my place till I return?"

"Quite so. I'll write and tell Lucy to join me."

"I'd wait till Saturday," said Fossbrooke, in a low

voice. "Cave says they can sail by Saturday morning, and it would be as well Lucy did not arrive till they are gone."

"You are right," said Tom, thoughtfully.

"It's not his poverty I'm thinking of," cried Fossbrooke. "With health, and strength, and vigour, a man can fight poverty. I want to learn that he is as clean-handed in this affair with the Sewells as he thinks himself. If I once were sure of that, I'd care little for his loss of fortune. I'd associate him with us in the mine, Tom. There will always be more wealth here than we can need. That new shaft promises splendidly. Such fat ore I have not seen for many a day."

Tom's mouth puckered, and his expression caught a strange sort of half-quizzical look, but he did not venture to speak.

"I know well," added the old man, cautiously, "that it's no good service to a young fellow to plunge him at once into ample means without making him feel the fatigues and trials of honest labour. He must be taught to believe that there is work before him—hard work too. He must be made to suppose that it is only by persistence and industry, and steady devotion to the pursuit, that it will yield its great results."

"I don't suspect our success will turn his head," said Tom, dryly.

"That's the very thing I want to guard against, Tom. Don't you see it is there all my anxiety lies?"

"Let him take a turn of our life here, and I'll warrant him against the growth of an over-sanguine disposition."

"Just so," said Fossbrooke, too intensely immersed in his own thought either to notice the words or the accents of the other—"just so; a hard winter up here in the snows, with all the tackle frozen, ice on the cranks, ice on the chains, ice everywhere, a dense steam from the heated air below, and a cutting sleet above, try a man's chest smartly; and then that lead colic, of which you can tell him something. These give a zest and a difficulty that prove what a man's nature is like."

"They have proved mine pretty well," said Tom, with a bitter laugh.

"And there's nothing like it in all the world for forming a man!" cried Fossbrooke, in a voice of triumph. "Your fair-weather fellows go through life with half their natures unexplored. They know no more of the interior country of their hearts than we do of Central Africa. Beyond the fact that there is something there—something—they know nothing. A man must have conflict, struggle, peril, to feel what stuff there's in him. He must be baffled, thwarted, ay, and even defeated. He must see himself amongst

other men as an unlucky dog that fellows will not willingly associate with. He must, on poor rations and tattered clothing, keep up a high heart—not always an easy thing to do; and, hardest of all, he must train himself never in all his poverty to condescend to a meanness that when his better day comes he would have to blush for.”

“If you weight poverty with all those fine responsibilities, I suspect you’ll break its back at once,” said Tom, laughing.

“Far from it. It is out of these selfsame responsibilities that poverty has a backbone at all;” and the old man stood bolt upright, and threw back his head as though he were emblematising what he had spoken of.

“Now, Tom, for business. Are you strong enough to come back here and look after the shaft?”

“Yes, I think so. I hope so.”

“I shall probably be some weeks away. I’ll have to go over to Holt; and I mean to run down amongst the Cornwall fellows and show them some of our ore. I’ll make their mouths water when they see it.”

Tom bit off the end of his cigar, but did not speak.

“I mean to make Beattie a present of ten shares in that new shaft, too. I declare it’s like a renewal of youth to me to feel I can do this sort of thing

again. I'll have to write to your father to come back also. Why should he live in exile while we could all be together again in affluence and comfort?"

Tom's eyes ranged round the bare walls and the shattered windows, and he raised his eyebrows in astonishment at the other's illusions.

"We had a stiff 'heat' before we weathered the point, that's certain, Tom," said the old man. "There were days when the sky looked dark enough, and it needed all our pluck and all our resolution to push on; but I never lost heart—I never wavered about our certainty of success—did I?"

"No; that you did not. And if you had, I certainly should not have wondered at it."

"I'll ask you to bear this testimony to me one of these days, and to tell how I bore up at times that you yourself were not over hopeful."

"Oh, that you may. I'll be honest enough to own that the sanguine humour was a rare one with me."

"And it's your worst fault. It is better for a young fellow to be disappointed every hour of the twenty-four than to let incredulity gain on him. Believe everything that it would be well to believe, and never grow soured with fortune if the dice don't turn up as you want them. I declare I'm sorry to leave this spot just now, when all looks so bright and cheery about it. You're a lucky dog, Tom, to

come in when the battle is won, and nothing more to do than announce the victory." And so saying he hurried off to prepare for the road, leaving Tom Lendrick in a state of doubt whether he should be annoyed or amused at the opinions he had heard from him.

CHAPTER XLIX.

PARTING COUNSELS.

QUICK and decided in all his movements, Fossbrooke set out almost immediately after this scene with Tom, and it was only as they gathered together at breakfast that it was discovered he had gone.

"He left Bermuda in the very same fashion," said Cave. "He had bought a coffee-plantation in the morning, and he set out the same night; and I don't believe he ever saw his purchase after. I asked him about it, and he said he thought—he wasn't quite sure—he made it a present to Dick Molyneux on his marriage. 'I only know, said he, 'it's not mine now.'"

As they sat over their breakfast, or smoked after it, they exchanged stories about Fossbrooke, all full of his strange eccentric ways, but all equally abounding in traits of kindheartedness and generosity. Comparing him with other men of liberal mould, the great and essential difference seemed to be that

Fossbrooke never measured his generosity. When he gave, he gave all that he had; he had no notion of aiding or assisting. His idea was to establish a man at once—easy, affluent, and independent. He abounded in precepts of prudence, maxims of thrift, and suchlike; but in practice he was recklessly lavish.

“Why an’t there more like him?” cried Trafford, enthusiastically.

“I’m not sure it would be better,” said Cave. “The race of idle, cringing, do-nothing fellows is large enough already. I suspect men like Fossbrooke—at least what he was in his days of prosperity—give a large influence to the spread of dependants.”

“The fault I find with him,” said Tom, “is his credulity. He believes everything, and, what’s worse, every one. There are fellows here who persuade him this mine is to make his fortune, and if he had thousands to-morrow he would embark them all in this speculation, the only result of which is to enrich these people, and ruin ourselves.”

“Is that your view of it?” asked Cave, in some alarm.

“Of course it is; and if you doubt it, come down with me into the gallery, as they call it, and judge for yourself.”

“But I have already joined the enterprise.”

“What! invested money in it?”

“Ay. Two thousand pounds—a large sum for me, I promise you. It was with immense persuasion, too, I got Fossbrooke to let me have these shares. He offered me scores of other things as a free gift in preference—salmon-fisheries in St John’s—a saw-mill on Lake Huron—a large tract of land at the Cape—I don’t know what else; but I was firm to the copper, and would have nothing but this.”

“I went in for lead,” said Trafford, laughingly.

“*You*; and are *you* involved in this also?” asked Tom.

“Yes; so far as I have promised to sell out, and devote whatever remains after paying my debts to the mine.”

“Why, this beats all the infatuation I ever heard of! You have not the excuse of men at a distance, who have only read or listened to plausible reports; but you have come here—you have been on the spot—you have seen with your own eyes the poverty-stricken air of the whole concern, the broken machinery, the ruined scaffoldings, the mounds of worthless dross that hide the very approach to the shaft; and you have seen us, too, and where, and how we live!”

“Very true,” broke in Cave, “but I have heard *him* talk, and I could no more resist the force of his

words than I could stand in a current and not be carried down by it."

"Exactly so," chimed in Trafford; "he was all the more irresistible that he did not seek to persuade. Nay, he tried his utmost to put me off the project, and, as with the Colonel, he offered me dozens of other ways to push my fortune, without costing me a farthing."

"Might not we," said Cave, "ask how it comes that you, taking this dispiriting view of all here, still continue to embark your fortunes in its success?"

"It is just because they are my fortunes; had it been my fortune, I had been more careful. There is all the difference in life between a man's hopes and his bank-stock. But if you ask me why I hang on here, after I have long ceased to think anything can come of it, my answer is, I do so just as I would refuse to quit the wreck, when he declared he would not leave it. It might be I should save my life by deserting him; but it would be little worth having afterwards; and I'd rather live with him in daily companionship, watching his manly courageous temper and his high-hearted way of dealing with difficulties, than I would go down the stream prosperously with many another; and over and over have I said to myself, If that fine nature of his can make defeat so endurable, what splendour of triumph would it not throw over a real success!"

“And this is exactly what we want to share,” said Trafford, smiling.

“But what do either of you know of the man, beyond the eccentricity, or the general kindliness with which he meets you? You have not seen him as I have, rising to his daily toil with a racking head and a fevered frame, without a word of complaint, or anything beyond a passing syllable of discomfort; never flinching, never yielding; as full of kind thought for others, as full of hopeful counsel, as in his best days; lightening labour with proverb and adage, and stimulating zeal with many a story. You can’t picture to yourselves this man, once at the head of a princely fortune, which he dispensed with more than princely liberality, sharing a poor miner’s meal of beans and oil with pleasant humour, and drinking a toast, in wine that would set the teeth on edge, to that good time when they would have more generous fare, and as happy hearts to enjoy it.

“Nor have you seen him, as I have, the nurse beside the sick-bed, so gentle, so thoughtful—a very woman in tenderness; and all that after a day of labour that would have borne down the strongest and the stoutest. And who is he that takes the world in such good part, and thinks so hopefully of his fellow-men? The man of all his time who has been most betrayed, most cheated, whose trust has been most often abused, whose benefits have been oftenest paid

back in ingratitude. It is possible enough he may not be the man to guide one to wealth and fortune; but to whatever condition of life he leads, of one thing I am certain, there will be no better teacher of the spirit and temper to enjoy it; there will be none who will grace any rank—the highest or the humblest—with a more manly dignity.”

“It was knowing all this of him,” said Cave, “that impelled me to associate myself with any enterprise he belonged to. I felt that if success were to be won by persistent industry and determination, his would do it, and that his noble character gave a guarantee for fair dealing better than all the parchments lawyers could engross.”

“From what I have seen of life, I’d not say that success attends such men as he is,” said Tom. “The world would be perhaps too good if it were so.”

Silence now fell upon the party, and the three men smoked on for some time without a word. At last Tom, rising from the bench where he had been seated, said, “Take my advice; keep to your soldiering, and have nothing to do with this concern here. You sail on Saturday next, and by Sunday evening, if you can forget that there is such an island as Sardinia, and such poor devils on it as ourselves, it will be all the better for you.”

“I am sorry to see you so depressed, Lendrick,” said Cave.

"I'm not so low as you suspect; but I'd be far lower if I thought that others were going to share our ill-fortunes."

Though the speech had no direct reference to Trafford, it chanced that their eyes met as he spoke, and Trafford's face flushed to a deep crimson as he felt the application of the words.

"Come here, Tom," said he, passing his arm within Lendrick's, and leading him off the terrace into a little copse of wild hollies at the foot of it. "Let me have one word with you." They walked on some seconds without a word, and when Trafford spoke his voice trembled with agitation. "I don't know," muttered he, "if Sir Brook has told you of the change in my fortunes—that I am passed over in the entail by my father, and am, so to say, a beggar."

Lendrick nodded, but said nothing.

"I have got debts, too, which, if not paid by my family, will compel me to sell out—has he told you this?"

"Yes; I think he said so."

"Like the kind, good fellow he is," continued Trafford, "he thinks he can do something with my people—talk my father over, and induce my mother to take my side. I'm afraid I know them better, and that they're not sorry to be rid of me at last. It is, however, just possible—I will not say more, but just possible—that he may succeed in making some sort

of terms for me before they cut me off altogether. I have no claim whatever, for I have spent already the portion that should have come to me as a younger son. I must be frank with you, Tom. There's no use in trying to make my case seem better than it is." He paused, and appeared to expect that the other would say something; but Tom smoked on, and made no sign whatever.

"And it comes to this," said Trafford, drawing a long breath and making a mighty effort, "I shall either have some small pittance or other—and small it must be—or be regularly cleaned out without a shilling."

A slight, very slight, motion of Tom's shoulders showed that he had heard him.

"If the worst is to befall me," said Trafford, with more energy than he had shown before, "I'll no more be a burthen to you than to any other of my friends. You shall hear little more of me; but if Fortune is going to give me her last chance, will *you* give me one also?"

"What do you mean?" said Tom, curtly.

"I mean," stammered out Trafford, whose colour came and went with agitation as he spoke—"I mean, shall I have your leave—that is, may I go over to Maddalena?—may I—O Tom," burst he out at last, "you know well what hope my heart clings to."

"If there was nothing but a question of money in

the way," broke in Tom, boldly, "I don't see how beggars like ourselves could start very strong objections. That a man's poverty should separate him from us would be a little too absurd; but there's more than that in it. You have got into some scrape or other. I don't want to force a confidence—I don't want to hear about it. It's enough for me that you are not a free man."

"If I can satisfy you that this is not the case——"

"It won't do to satisfy *me*," said Tom, with a strong emphasis on the last word.

"I mean, if I can show that nothing unworthy, nothing dishonourable, attaches to me."

"I don't suspect all that would suffice. It's not a question of your integrity or your honour. It's the simple matter whether, when professing to care for one woman, you made love to another?"

"If I can disprove that. It's a long story——"

"Then, for heaven's sake, don't tell it to me."

"Let me, at least, show that it is not fair to shun me."

There was such a tone of sorrow in his voice as he spoke that Tom turned at once towards him, and said, "If you can make all this affair straight—I mean, if it be clear that there was no more in it than such a passing levity that better men than either of us have now and then fallen into—I don't see why you may not come back with me."

"Oh, Tom, if you really will let me!"

"Remember, however, you come at your own peril. I tell you frankly, if your explanation should fail to satisfy the one who has to hear it, it fails with me too—do you understand me?"

"I think I do," said Trafford, with dignity.

"It's as well that we should make no mistake; and now you are free to accept my invitation, or to refuse it. What do you say?"

"I say, Yes. I go back with you."

"I'll go and see, then, if Cave will join us," said Tom, turning hastily away, and very eager to conceal the agitation he was suffering, and of which he was heartily ashamed.

Cave accepted the project with delight—he wanted to see the island—but, more still, he wanted to see that Lucy Lendrick of whom Sir Brook had spoken so rapturously. "I suppose," whispered he in Tom's ear, "you know all about Trafford. You've heard that he has been cut out of the estate, and been left with nothing but his pay?"

Tom nodded assent.

"He's not a fellow to sail under false colours, but he might still have some delicacy in telling about it——"

"He has told me all," said Tom, dryly.

"There was a scrape too—not very serious, I hope—in Ireland."

"He has told me of that also," said Tom.
"When shall you be ready? Will four o'clock
suit you?"

"Perfectly."

And they parted.

CHAPTER L.

ON THE ISLAND.

WHEN, shortly after daybreak, the felucca rounded the point of the island, and stood in for the little bay of Maddalena, Lucy was roused from sleep by her maid with the tidings. "Give me the glass, quickly," cried she, as she rushed to the window, and after one rapid glance, which showed her the little craft gaily decked with the flag of England, she threw herself upon her bed, and sobbed in very happiness. In truth, there was in the long previous day's expectancy—in the conflict of her hope and fear—a tension that could only be relieved by tears.

How delightful it was to rally from that momentary gush of emotion, and feel so happy! To think so well of the world as to believe that all goes for the best in it, is a pleasant frame of mind to begin one's day with. To feel that, though we have suffered anxiety, and all the tortures of deferred hope, it was good for us to know that everything was happening

better for us than we could have planned it for ourselves, and that positively it was not so much by events we had been persecuted, as by our own impatient reading of them. Something of all these sensations passed through Lucy's mind as she hurried here and there to prepare for her guests, stopping at intervals to look out towards the sea, and wonder how little way the felucca made, and how persistently she seemed to cling to the selfsame spot.

Nor was she altogether unjust in this. The breeze had died away at sunrise ; and in the interval before the land-wind should spring up there was almost a dead calm.

"Is she moving at all?" cried Lucy, to one of the sailors who lounged on the rocks beneath the window.

The man thought not. They had kept their course too far from shore, and were becalmed in consequence.

How could they have done so?—surely sailors ought to have known better! and Tom, who was always boasting how he knew every current, and every eddy of wind, what was he about? It was a rude shock to that sweet optimism of a few moments back to have to own that here at least was something that might have been better.

"And what ought they to do? what can they do?" asked she, impatiently, of the sailor.

"Wait till towards noon, when the land-breeze freshens up, and beat."

"Beat means, go back and forward, scarcely gaining a mile an hour?"

The sailor smiled, and owned she was not far wrong.

"Which means that they may pass the day there," cried she, fretfully.

"They're not going to do it, anyhow," said the man; "they are lowering a boat, and going to row ashore."

"Oh, how much better! and how long will it take them?"

"Two hours, if they're good rowers; three, or even four, if they're not."

"Come in and have a glass of wine," said she; "and you shall look through the telescope, and tell me how they row, and who are in the boat—I mean how many are in it."

"What a fine glass! I can see them as if they were only a cable's length off. There's the Signorino Maso, your brother, at the bow oar; and then there's a sailor, and another sailor; and there's a Signore, a large man—per Bacco, he's the size of three—at the stroke; and an old man, with white hair, and a cap with gold lace round it, steering; he has bright buttons down his coat."

"Never mind *him*. What of the large man—is he young?"

“He pulls like a young fellow! There now, he has thrown off his coat, and is going at it in earnest! Ah, he’s no Signore after all.”

“How no Signore?” asked she, hastily.

“None but a sailor could row as he does! A man must be bred to it to handle an oar in that fashion.”

She took the glass impatiently from him, and tried to see the boat; but whether it was the unsteadiness of her hand, or that some dimness clouded her eyes, she could not catch the object, and turned away and left the room.

The land-wind freshened, and sent a strong sea against the boat, and it was not until late in the afternoon that the party landed, and, led by Tom, ascended the path to the cottage. At his loud shout of “Lucy,” she came to the door, looking very happy indeed, but more agitated than she well liked. “My sister, Colonel Cave,” said Tom, as they came up; “and here’s an old acquaintance, Lucy; but he’s a major now. Sir Brook is away to England, and sent you all manner of loving messages.”

“I have been watching your progress since early morning,” said Lucy, “and, in truth, I scarcely thought you seemed to come nearer. It was a hard pull.”

“All Trafford’s fault,” said Tom, laughing; “he would do more than his share, and kept the boat always dead against her rudder.”

"That's not the judgment one of our boatmen here passed on him," said Lucy; "he said it must be a sailor, and no Signore, who was at the stroke oar."

"See what it is to have been educated at Eton," said Cave, slyly; "and yet there are people assail our public schools!"

Thus chatting and laughing, they entered the cottage, and were soon seated at table at a most comfortable little dinner.

"I will say," said Tom, in return for some compliment from the Colonel, "she is a capital house-keeper. I never had anything but limpets and sea-urchins to eat till she came, and now I feed like an alderman."

"When men assign us the humble office of providing for them, I remark they are never chary of their compliments," said Lucy, laughingly. "Master Tom is willing to praise my cookery, though he says nothing of my companionship."

"It was such a brotherly speech," chimed in Cave.

"Well, it's jolly, certainly," said Tom, as he leaned back in his chair, "to sit here with that noble sea-view at our feet, and those grand old cliffs over us."

While Cave concurred, and strained his eyes to catch some object out seaward, Trafford, for almost the first time, found courage to address Lucy. He had asked something about whether she liked the

island as well as that sweet cottage where first he saw her, and by this they were led to talk of that meeting, and of the long happy day they had passed at Holy Island.

"How I'd like to go back to it!" said Lucy, earnestly.

"To the time, or to the place? to which would you wish to go back?"

"To the Nest," said Lucy, blushing slightly; "they were about the happiest days I ever knew, and dear papa was with us then."

"And is it not possible that you may all meet together there one of these days? he'll not remain at the Cape, will he?"

"I was forgetting that you knew him," said she, warmly; "you met papa since I saw you last; he wrote about you, and told how kindly and tenderly you had nursed him on his voyage."

"Oh, did he? did he indeed speak of me?" cried Trafford, with intense emotion.

"He not only spoke warmly about his affection for you, but he showed pain and jealousy when he thought that some newer friends had robbed him of you—but perhaps you forget the Cape and all about it."

Trafford's face became crimson, and what answer he might have made to this speech there is no knowing, when Tom cried out, "We are going to have our

coffee and cigar on the rocks, Lucy, but you will come with us."

"Of course; I have had three long days of my own company, and am quite wearied of it."

In the little cleft to which they repaired, a small stream divided the space, leaving only room for two people on the rocks at either side; and after some little jesting as to who was to have the coffee-pot, and who the brandy-flask, Tom and Cave nestled in one corner, while Lucy and Trafford, with more caution as to proximity, seated themselves on the rock opposite.

"We were talking about the Cape, Major Trafford, I think," said Lucy, determined to bring him back to the dreaded theme.

"Were we? I think not; I think we were remembering all the pleasant days beside the Shannon."

"If you please, more sugar and no brandy; and now for the Cape."

"I'll just hand them the coffee," said he, rising and crossing over to the others.

"Won't she let you smoke, Trafford?" said Tom, seeing the unlighted cigar in the other's fingers; "come over here, then, and escape the tyranny."

"I was just saying," cried Cave, "I wish our Government would establish a protectorate, as they call it, over these islands, and send us out here to garrison them; I call this downright paradise."

"You may smoke, Major Trafford," said Lucy, as he returned; "I am very tolerant about tobacco."

"I don't care for it—at least not now."

"You'd rather tell me about the Cape," said she, with a sly laugh. "Well, I'm all attention."

"There's really nothing to tell," said he, in confusion. "Your father will have told you already what a routine sort of thing life is—always meeting the same people—made ever more uniform by their official stations. It's always the Governor, and the Chief-Justice, and the Bishop, and the Attorney-General."

"But they have wives and daughters?"

"Yes; but official people's wives and daughters are always of the same pattern. They are only females of the species."

"So that you were terribly bored?"

"Just so—terribly bored."

"What a boon from heaven it must have been then to have met the Sewells," said she, with a well-put-on carelessness.

"Oh, your father mentioned the Sewells, did he?" asked Trafford, eagerly.

"I should think he did mention them! Why, they were the people he was so jealous of. He said that you were constantly with him till they came—his companion, in fact—and that he grieved heavily over your desertion of him."

"There was nothing like desertion; besides," added he, after a moment, "I never suspected he attached any value to my society."

"Very modest, certainly; and probably, as the Sewells did attach this value, you gave it where it was fully appreciated."

"I wish I had never met them," muttered Trafford; and though the words were mumbled beneath his breath, she heard them.

"That sounds very ungratefully," said she, with a smile, "if but one-half of what we hear be true."

"What is it you have heard?"

"I'm keeping Major Trafford from his cigar, Tom; he's too punctilious to smoke in my company, and so I shall leave him to you;" and so saying she arose, and turned towards the cottage.

Trafford followed her on the instant, and overtook her at the porch.

"One word—only one," cried he, eagerly. "I see how I have been misrepresented to you. I see what you must think of me; but will you only hear me?"

"I have no right to hear you," said she, coldly.

"Oh, do not say so, Lucy," cried he, trying to take her hand, but which she quickly withdrew from him. "Do not say that you withdraw from me the only interest that attaches me to life. If you knew how friendless I am, you would not leave me."

"He upon whom fortune smiles so pleasantly very

seldom wants for any blandishments the world has to give; at least, I have always heard that people are invariably courteous to the prosperous."

"And do you talk of me as prosperous?"

"Why, you are my brother's type of all that is luckiest in life. Only hear Tom on the subject! Hear him talk of his friend Trafford, and you will hear of one on whom all the good fairies showered their fairest gifts."

"The fairies have grown capricious, then. Has Tom told you nothing—I mean since he came back?"

"No; nothing."

"Then let me tell it."

In very few words, and with wonderfully little emotion, Trafford told the tale of his altered fortunes. Of course he did not reveal the reasons for which he had been disinherited, but loosely implied that his conduct had displeased his father, and with his mother he had never been a favourite. "Mine," said he, "is the vulgar story that almost every family has its instance of—the younger son, who goes into the world with the pretensions of a good house, and forgets that he himself is as poor as the neediest man in the regiment. They grew weary of my extravagance, and, indeed, they began to get weary of myself, and I am not surprised at it! and the end has come at last. They have cast me off, and, except my commission, I have now nothing in the world. I told

Tom all this, and his generous reply was, 'Your poverty only draws you nearer to us.' Yes, Lucy, these were his words. Do you think that his sister could have spoken them?"

"Before she could do so, she certainly should be satisfied on other grounds than those that touch your fortune," said Lucy, gravely.

"And it was to give her that same satisfaction I came here," cried he, eagerly. "I accepted Tom's invitation on the sole pledge that I could vindicate myself to you. I know what is laid to my charge, and I know too how hard it will be to clear myself without appearing like a coxcomb." He grew crimson as he said this, and the shame that overwhelmed him was a better advocate than all his words. "But," added he, "you shall think me vain, conceited—a puppy, if you will—but you shall not believe me false. Will you listen to me?"

"On one condition I will," said she, calmly.

"Name your condition. What is it?"

"My condition is this: that when I have heard you out—heard all that you care to tell me—if it should turn out that I am not satisfied—I mean, if it appear to me a case in which I ought not to be satisfied—you will pledge your word that this conversation will be our last together."

"But, Lucy, in what spirit will you judge me? If you can approach the theme thus coldly, it

gives me little hope that you will wish to acquit me."

A deep blush covered her face as she turned away her head, but made no answer.

"Be only fair, however," cried he, eagerly. "I ask for nothing more." He drew her arm within his as he spoke, and they turned towards the beach where a little sweep of the bay lay hemmed in between lofty rocks. "Here goes my last throw for fortune," said Trafford," after they had strolled along some minutes in silence. "And oh, Lucy, if you knew how I would like to prolong these minutes before, as it may be, they are lost to me for ever! If you knew how I would like to give this day to happiness and hope!"

She said nothing, but walked along with her head down, her face slightly averted from him.

"I have not told you of my visit to the Priory," said he, suddenly.

"No; how came you to go there?"

"I went to see the place where you had lived, to see the garden you had tended, and the flowers you loved, Lucy. I took away this bit of jasmine from a tree that overhung a little rustic seat. It may be, for aught I know, all that may remain to me of you ere this day closes."

"My dear little garden! I was so fond of it!" she said, concealing her emotion as well as she could.

"I am such a coward," said, he angrily ; "I declare I grow ashamed of myself. If any one had told me I would have skulked danger in this wise, I'd have scouted the idea! Take this, Lucy," said he, giving her the sprig of withered jasmine ; "if what I shall tell you exculpate me—if you are satisfied that I am not unworthy of your love—you will give it back to me ; if I fail——" He could not go on, and another silence of some seconds ensued.

"You know the compact now?" asked he, after a moment. She nodded assent.

For full five minutes they walked along without a word, and then Trafford, at first timidly, but by degrees more boldly, began a narrative of his visit to the Sewells' house. It is not—nor need it be—our task to follow him through a long narrative, broken, irregular, and unconnected as it was. Hampered by the difficulties which on each side beset him of disparaging those of whom he desired to say no word of blame, and of still vindicating himself from all charge of dishonour, he was often, it must be owned, entangled, and sometimes scarcely intelligible. He owned to have been led into high play against his will, and equally against his will induced to form an intimacy with Mrs Sewell, which, beginning in a confidence, wandered away into heaven knows what of sentimentality, and the like. Trafford talked of Lucy Lendrick and his love, and Mrs Sewell talked

of her cruel husband and her misery; and they ended by making a little stock-fund of affection, where they came in common to make their deposits and draw their cheques on fortune.

All this intercourse was the more dangerous that he never knew its danger; and though, on looking back, he was astonished to think what intimate relations subsisted between them, yet, at the time, these had not seemed in the least strange to him. To her sad complaints of neglect, ill-usage, and insult, he offered such consolations as occurred to him; nor did it seem to him that there was any peril in his path, till his mother burst forth with that atrocious charge against Mrs Sewell for having seduced her son, and which, so far from repelling with the indignation it might have evoked, she appeared rather to bend under, and actually seek his protection to shelter her. Weak and broken by his accident at the race, these difficulties almost overcame his reason; never was there, to his thinking, such a web of entanglement. The hospitality of the house he was enjoying outraged and violated by the outbreaks of his mother's temper; Sewell's confidence in him betrayed by the confessions he daily listened to from his wife; her sorrows and griefs all tending to a dependence on his counsels which gave him a partnership in her conduct. "With all these upon me," said he, "I don't think I was actually mad, but very often I felt terribly

close to it. A dozen times a-day I would willingly have fought Sewell; as willingly would I have given all I ever hoped to possess in the world to enable his wife to fly his tyranny, and live apart from him. I so far resented my mother's outrageous conduct, that I left her without a good-bye."

I can no more trace him through this wandering explanation than I dare ask my reader to follow. It was wild, broken, and discursive. Now interrupted by protestations of innocence, now dashed by acknowledgments of sorrow, who knows if his unartistic story did not serve him better than a more connected narrative—there was such palpable truth in it!

Nor was Lucy less disposed to leniency that he who pleaded before her was no longer the rich heir of a great estate, with a fair future before him, but one poor and portionless as herself. In the reserve with which he shrouded his quarrel with his family, she fancied she could see the original cause—his love for her; and if this were so, what more had she need of to prove his truth and fidelity? Who knows if her woman's instinct had not revealed this to her? Who knows if, in that finer intelligence of the female mind, she had not traced out the secret of the reserve that hampered him, of the delicate forbearance with which he avoided the theme of his estrangement from his family? And if so, what a plea was it for him! Poor fellow, thought she, what has he not given up for me!

Rich men make love with great advantages on their side. There is no doubt that he who can confer demesnes and diamonds has much in his favour. The power that abides in wealth adds marvellous force to the suitor's tale ; but there is, be it owned, that in poverty which, when allied with a sturdy self-dependence, appeals wonderfully to a woman's mind. She feels all the devotion that is offered her, and she will not be outdone in generosity. It is so fine of him, when others care for nothing but wealth and riches, to be satisfied with humble fortune, and with *me* ! There is the summing up, and none need be more conclusive.

How long Trafford might have gone on strengthening his case, and calling up fresh evidence to his credit—by what force of words he might still have sustained his character for fidelity—there is no saying ; but his eloquence was suddenly arrested by the sight of Cave and Tom coming to meet them.

“ Oh, Lucy,” cried he, “ do not quit my arm till you tell me my fate. For very pity's sake, do not leave me in the misery of this anxiety,” said he, as she disengaged herself, affecting to arrange her shawl.

“ I have a word to say to my brother,” said she, hurriedly ; “ keep this sprig of jasmine for me. I mean to plant it somewhere ;” and without another word she hastened away and made for the house.

“ So we shall have to sail at once, Trafford,” said

Cave. "The Admiral has sent over the Gondomar to fetch us; and here's a lieutenant with a despatch waiting for us at the cottage."

"The service may go—no, I don't mean that; but, if you sail to-morrow, you sail without me."

"Have you made it all right?" whispered Tom in his ear.

"I'm the happiest fellow in Europe," said he, throwing his arm round the other's shoulder. "Come here, Tom, and let me tell you all—all."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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